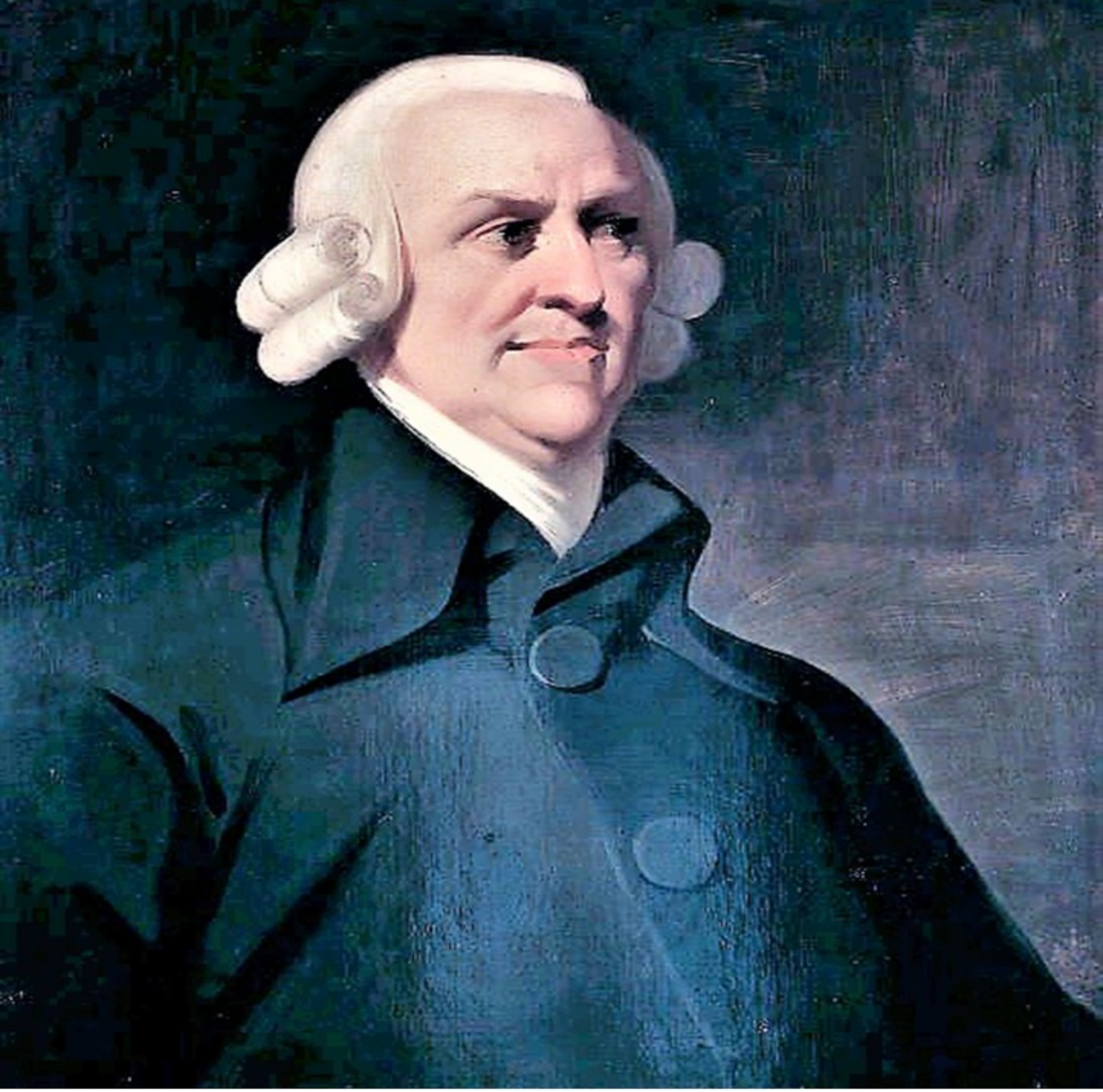

Early Modern Texts

The Theory of Moral Sentiments

Adam Smith

The Theory of Moral Sentiments

ADAM SMITH

(1723-1790)

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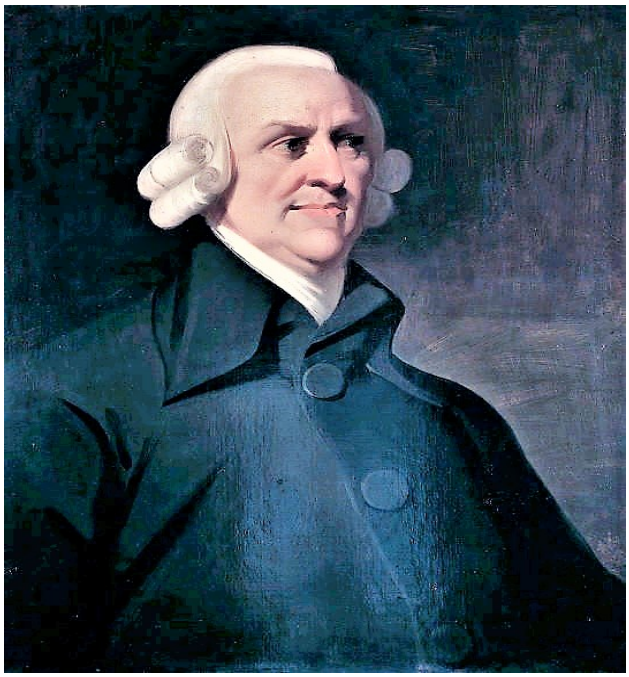

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HOW TO READ THE TEXT

[Brackets] enclose editorial explanations. Small ·dots· enclose material that has been added, but can be read as though it were part of the original text. Occasional •bullets, and also indenting of passages that are not quotations, are meant as aids to grasping the structure of a sentence or a thought. Every four-point ellipsis . . . . indicates the omission of a brief passage that seems to present more difficulty than it is worth. Longer omissions are reported between brackets in normal-sized type.

In Adam Smith's day a 'sentiment' could be anything on a spectrum with feelings at one end and opinions at the other. This work of his is strongly tilted in the 'feeling' direction, but throughout the present version the word 'sentiment' will be left untouched.

Part I: The Propriety of Action

Section 1: The Sense of Propriety

- Chapter 1: Sympathy
- Chapter 2: The pleasure of mutual sympathy
- Chapter 3: How we judge the propriety of other men's affections by their concord or dissonance with our own
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Section 3: How prosperity and adversity affect our judgments about the rightness of actions; and why it is easier to win our approval in prosperity than in adversity

- Chapter 1: The intensity-difference between joy and sympathy with joy is less than the intensity-difference between sorrow and sympathy with sorrow
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Section 1: The Sense of Propriety

Chapter 1: Sympathy

No matter how selfish you think man is, it's obvious that there are some principles [here = 'drives', 'sources of energy'; see note here] in his nature that give him an interest in the welfare of others, and make *their* happiness necessary to *him*, even if he gets nothing from it but the pleasure of seeing it. That's what is involved in pity or compassion, the emotion we feel for the misery of others, when we see it or are made to think about it in a vivid way. The sorrow of others often makes us sad—that's an obvious matter of fact that doesn't need to be argued for by giving examples. This sentiment, like all the other basic passions of human nature, is not confined to virtuous and humane people, though they may feel it more intensely than others do. The greatest ruffian, the most hardened criminal, has something of it.

We have ·of course· no immediate experience of what other men feel; so the only way we can get an idea of what someone else is feeling is by thinking about what *we* would feel if we were in *his* situation. . . . Our imagination comes into this, but only by representing to us the feelings we would have if etc. We see or think about a man being tortured on the rack; we think of ourselves enduring all the same torments, entering into his body (so to speak) and becoming in a way the same person as he is. In this manner we form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something that somewhat resembles them, though it is less intense. When his agonies are brought home to us in this way, when we have adopted them and made them our own, they start to affect us and we then tremble and shudder at the thought of what he feels. Just as *being* in pain or distress of any kind arouses the most excessive sorrow, so *conceiving or imagining being* in pain or distress arouses some degree of the same emotion, the degree being large or small depending on how lively or dull the conception is. [Notice Smith's talk of 'bringing home to us' someone's emotional state; he often uses that turn of phrase to express the idea of imaginatively putting oneself in someone else's position.]

So my thesis is that our fellow-feeling for the misery of others comes from our imaginatively changing places with the sufferer, thereby coming to •conceive what he feels or even to •feel what he feels. If this doesn't seem to you obvious enough, just as it stands, there is plenty of empirical evidence for it. When we see someone poised to smash a stick down on the

leg or arm of another person, we naturally shrink and pull back our own leg or arm; and when the stick connects, we feel it in some measure, and are hurt by it along with the sufferer. When a crowd are gazing at a dancer on a slack rope, they naturally writhe and twist and balance their own bodies, as they see *him* do, and as they feel *they* would have to do if they were up on the rope where he is. . . . Men notice that when they look at sore eyes they often *feel* soreness in their own eyes. . . .

It's not only in situations of pain or sorrow that this fellow-feeling of ours is evoked. When someone has *any* passion about *any* object, the thought of his situation creates an analogous emotion in the breast of every attentive spectator. [In Smith's day it was normal to use 'the breast' to mean something like 'the emotional part or aspect of the person'. It will be retained sometimes in this version, always with that meaning.] Our joy over the deliverance of the heroes of tragedy or romance is as sincere as our grief for their distress. . . . We enter into their gratitude towards the faithful friends who stayed with them in their difficulties; and we heartily go along with their resentment against the perfidious traitors who injured, abandoned, or deceived them. [The phrase 'go along with', though it sounds *late* modern, is Smith's; he uses it about 30 times in this work.] In every passion of which the mind of man is capable, the emotions of the bystander always correspond to what he imagines must be the feelings of the sufferer, which he does by bringing the case home to himself, ·i.e. imagining being himself in the sufferer's situation·.

'Pity' and 'compassion' are labels for our fellow-feeling with the sorrow of others. 'Sympathy', though its meaning may originally have been the same, can now fairly properly be used to denote our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever. [Since Smith's time, 'sympathy' has moved back to what he says was its original meaning: we don't say 'She had great sympathy for his joy'. In the present version the word will be retained; his broadened meaning for it needs to be remembered.]

We sometimes see sympathy arise merely from the view of a certain emotion in another person: the passions sometimes seem to be passed from one man to another instantaneously, without the second man's having any knowledge of what aroused them in the first man. When grief or joy, for example, are strongly expressed in someone's look and gestures, they immediately affect the spectator with some degree of a similar painful or agreeable emotion. A smiling face is a cheerful object to everyone who sees it, and a sorrowful face is a melancholy one.

But this doesn't hold for every passion. There are some passions the expressions of which arouse no sort of sympathy; they serve rather to disgust and provoke us against them, before we know what gave rise to them. The furious behaviour of an angry man is more likely to exasperate us against •him than against •his enemies. Because we don't know what provoked him, we can't bring his case home to ourselves, imaginatively putting ourselves in his position. But we can put ourselves in the position of those with whom he is angry; we can see what violence they may be exposed to from such an enraged adversary. So we readily sympathize with their fear or resentment, and are immediately inclined to side with them against the man from whom they appear to be in so much danger.

·There's a very general point underlying the difference between our reaction to someone else's grief or joy and our reaction to someone's rage·. The mere appearances of grief or joy inspire us with some level of a similar emotion, because they suggest to us the general idea of some **good or bad fortune** that has come to the person in whom we observe them; and with grief and joy this is sufficient to have some little influence on us. Grief and joy don't have effects that go beyond •the person who has the grief or joy; expressions of those passions don't suggest to us—in the way that expressions of resentment do—the idea of some other person for whom we are concerned and whose interests are opposite to •his. So the general idea of **good or bad fortune** creates some concern for the person who has met with it, but the general idea of **provocation** arouses no sympathy with the anger of the man who has been provoked. It seems that nature teaches us •to be more averse to entering into this passion and •to be inclined to take sides against it until we are informed of its cause.

Even our sympathy with someone else's grief or joy is incomplete until we know the cause of his state. General lamentations that express nothing but the anguish of the sufferer don't cause in us any •actual strongly-felt sympathy; what they do is to make us want to inquire into the person's situation, and to make us •disposed to sympathize with him. The first question we ask is 'What has happened?' Until this is answered, our fellow-feeling is not very considerable. We do feel unhappy, ·but that is from sources different from sympathy; it is· because of the vague idea we have of his misfortune, and still more from our torturing ourselves with guesses about what the source of his misery may be.

So the main source of sympathy is not the view of the other person's passion but rather the situation that arouses the passion. Sometimes we feel for someone else a passion that he ·doesn't have and· apparently isn't capable of having; because that passion arises in •our breast just from •imagining ourselves as being in his situation, though it doesn't arise in •his breast from •really being in that situation. When we blush for someone's impudence and rudeness, though he seems to have no sense of how badly he is behaving, that is because we can't help feeling how utterly embarrassed we would be if we had behaved in such an absurd manner.

Of all the calamities to which mankind can be subject, the loss of reason appears to be by far the most dreadful, in the mind of anyone who has the least spark of humanity. We behold that last stage of human wretchedness with deeper pity than any other. But the poor wretch who is in that condition may laugh and sing, having no sense of his own misery. The anguish that the rest of us feel at the sight of such a person can't be a reflection of any sentiment that *he* has. The spectator's compassion must arise purely from the thought of what he himself would feel if he were reduced to that same unhappy condition while also (this may well be impossible) regarding it with his present reason and judgment.

What are the pangs of a mother when she hears the moanings of her infant who can't express what it feels during the agony of disease? In her idea of what it suffers, she brings together

•her child's real helplessness,

•her own consciousness of that helplessness, and

•her own terrors for the unknown consequences of the child's illness,

and out of all these she forms, for her own sorrow, the most complete image of misery and distress. [The phrase 'for her own sorrow' is Smith's, as is 'for our own misery' in the next paragraph.] But the infant feels only the unpleasantness of the present instant, which can never be great. With regard to the future, the infant is perfectly secure. Its lack of thoughtfulness and of foresight gives it an antidote against •fear and •anxiety—those great tormentors of the human breast, from which reason and philosophy will in vain try to defend the child when it grows up to be a man.

We sympathize even with the dead. Ignoring what is of real importance in their situation, namely the awe-inspiring question of what future is in store for them ·in the after-life·, we are mainly affected by factors that strike *our* senses but can't have any influence on *their* happiness. It is miserable,

we think, to be deprived of the light of the sun; to be shut out from life and conversation; to be laid in the cold grave, a prey to corruption and worms; to be no more thought of in this world, but to be quite soon obliterated from the affections, and almost from the memory, of their dearest friends and relatives. Surely, we imagine, we can never feel too much for those who have suffered such dreadful calamity! The tribute of our fellow-feeling seems to be doubly due to them now, when they are in danger of being forgotten by everyone; and in paying vain honours to their memory we are trying, for our own misery, artificially to keep alive our sad remembrance of their misfortune. The fact that our sympathy can't bring them any consolation seems to add to their calamity; and our own sense of their misery is sharpened by the thought that anything we can do ·for them· is unavailing, and that the regret, the love, and the lamentations of their friends, which alleviate every other kind of distress, can't bring them any comfort. But it is absolutely certain that the welfare of the dead isn't affected by any of this; the profound security of their repose can't be disturbed by the thought of any of these things. The idea of the dreary and endless melancholy that our imagination naturally ascribes to their condition is purely a result of putting together

- •the change that they have undergone,
- •our own consciousness of that change,
- •our putting ourselves in their situation—inserting our living souls into their dead bodies (so to speak), and conceiving what our emotions would be in that situation.

It is just •*this* illusion of the imagination that makes the thought of our own dissolution so terrible to us. It's because of •*it* that the thought of circumstances that undoubtedly can't give us pain when we are dead makes us miserable while we are alive. That is the source of one of the most important action-drivers in human nature, namely the dread of death, which is the great poison to happiness but the great restraint on the injustice of mankind; it afflicts and humiliates the individual, while guarding and protecting society.

Chapter 2: The pleasure of mutual sympathy

Whatever the cause of sympathy may be, and however it may be aroused, nothing pleases us more than to observe in others a fellow-feeling with all the emotions of our own breast, and nothing shocks us more than the

seeming absence of such fellow-feeling. Those who are fond of deriving all our sentiments from certain refinements of self-love think they can explain this pleasure and this pain consistently with their own principles. Their explanation goes like this:

> Man is conscious of his own weakness, and of his need for the assistance of others; so he rejoices when he sees that they *do* adopt his own passions, because this assures him of that assistance; and he grieves when he sees that they *don't*, because that assures him of their opposition.

But both the pleasure and the pain are always felt so instantaneously, and often on such minor issues, that it seems evident that neither of them can come from any such self-interested consideration. A man is cast down when, after having tried to be amusing, he looks around and sees that no-one else laughs at his jokes; and when his jokes do succeed, he gets great pleasure from the amusement of the people he is with, and regards this match between their sentiments and his own as the greatest applause. ·It's not plausible to suggest that what's going on here is rapid calculation about whether he will be helped in times of need·.

[Smith's next paragraph is not unclear but is very compressed. What follows here is a more fully spelled-out statement of its content. Our immediate topic is (let's say) the pleasure I get from seeing that my companions are enjoying my jokes. Smith has been expounding this explanation of the pleasure:

> (1) I enjoy the jokes, and I want others to sympathize with my frame of mind by enjoying them too; and I suffer disappointment if this doesn't happen.

This, Smith holds, is an instance of the natural universal human **desire for others to show sympathy**. In our present paragraph he mentions a different possible explanation:

> (2) I enjoy the jokes; if others also enjoy them, then by sympathetically taking in their pleasure I increase my own; and if they don't enjoy them, I suffer from the absence of a hoped-for extra pleasure.

This has nothing to do with a desire to be sympathised with; it is simply an instance of **sympathy**. This may be a part of the story, Smith says, but isn't all of it. Now let him take over:] When we have read a book or poem so often that we can no longer enjoy reading it by ourselves, we can still take pleasure in reading it to a companion. To him it has all the graces of

novelty; we enter into the surprise and admiration that it naturally arouses in him but can no longer arouse in us; we consider the ideas that it presents in the light in which they appear to him rather than in the light in which they appear to ourselves, and we enjoy by sympathy his enjoyment that thus enlivens our own. If he seemed not to be entertained by the book, we would be annoyed and could no longer take pleasure in reading it to him. It's like that with our attempts to amuse others. The company's merriment no doubt enlivens our own, and their silence no doubt disappoints us. But though this may *contribute* both to the pleasure we get from success and the pain we feel if we fail, it is far from being the *only* cause of either the pleasure or the pain; it can't account for the pleasure we get when our sentiments are matched by the sentiments of others, or the pain that comes from a failure of such a match. [The main thing Smith says about why that's not the whole story is that it can't be *any* of the grief or pain side of the story.] I hope my friends will feel sad when I am sad, but not because I want their feelings to reflect back on me and increase my sadness! I do want their sympathy; if they show that they sympathize, this alleviates grief by insinuating into the heart almost the only agreeable sensation that it is capable of receiving at that time. ·The pattern here is that of **(1)** and not **(2)**·.

So it's important to notice ·that the grief and pain side is more important to us than the joy side·. We're more concerned to communicate to our friends our disagreeable passions than our agreeable ones; and it's in connection with the disagreeable passions that we get more satisfaction from their sympathy and are more upset when they don't sympathize.

When an unfortunate person finds others to whom he can communicate the cause of his sorrow, *how* does this bring him relief? Their sympathy seems to unload some of his burden of distress; it's not wrong to say that they *share* it with him. . . . Yet by recounting his misfortunes he to some extent renews his grief. They awaken in his memory the remembrance of the circumstances that brought about his affliction. His tears accordingly flow faster than before, and he is apt to abandon himself to all the weakness of sorrow. But he takes pleasure in all this, and can be seen to be relieved by it, because the sweetness of their sympathy more than compensates for the bitterness of his sorrow—the sorrow that he had thus enlivened and renewed in order to arouse this sympathy. The cruelest insult that can be offered to the unfortunate is to appear to make light of their calamities. To seem not to be affected with the joy of our companions is mere

•impoliteness; but not to have a serious expression when they tell us their afflictions is real and gross •inhumanity.

Love is an agreeable passion, resentment a disagreeable one; and accordingly we're not half so anxious that our friends should adopt our friendships as that they should enter into our resentments. We can forgive them for seeming not to be much affected when some favour comes our way, but we lose all patience if they seem not to care about injuries that have been done to us; and we aren't half as angry with them for not entering into our gratitude as for not sympathizing with our resentment. They can easily avoid being friends to our friends, but can hardly avoid being enemies to those with whom we are at odds. We may sometimes make a gesture towards an awkward quarrel with them if they are at enmity with any of our friends, but we don't usually outright resent this; whereas we seriously quarrel with them if they live in friendship with any of our enemies. The agreeable passions of love and joy can satisfy and support the heart without any supplementary pleasure, but the bitter and painful emotions of grief and resentment strongly require the healing consolation of sympathy.

Just as the person who is primarily concerned in any event is pleased with our sympathy and hurt by the lack of it, so also we seem to be pleased when we can sympathize with him and upset when we can't. We run not only to congratulate the successful but also to condole with the afflicted; and the •pleasure we get from contact with someone with whom we can entirely sympathize in all the passions of his heart seems to do more than compensate for the •painfulness of the sorrow that our knowledge of his situation gives us. When we find that we can't sympathize with a friend's sorrow, that spares us sympathetic pain; but there's no pleasure in that. If we hear someone loudly lamenting his misfortunes, and find that when we bring his case home to ourselves it has no such violent effect on us, we are shocked at his grief; and because we can't enter into it we call it pusillanimity and weakness. [English still contains 'pusillanimous', from Latin meaning 'small mind'; here it means something like 'weak-spirited, lacking in gumption'.] And on the other side, if we see someone being too happy or too much elevated (we think) over some little piece of good fortune, this irritates us. . . . We are even annoyed if our companion laughs louder or longer at a joke than we think it deserves—i.e. longer than we feel that *we* could laugh at it.

Chapter 3: How we judge the propriety of other men's affections by their concord or dissonance with our own

[•Smith uses 'affection' about 200 times, usually in a meaning that sprawls across feelings and mental attitudes of all kinds; here and a *few* other places it express the idea of someone's being 'affectionate' in our sense. There is no satisfactory way to sort this out; you'll have to be guided by the context of each use. As for the cognate verb: when Smith writes of our being 'differently affected' by something he means that it causes us to have different 'affections' in the very broad sense. •In Smith's day 'propriety' meant 'correctness', 'rightness'; it was a very general term to cover one side of the right/wrong line. It won't be replaced by anything else in this version; but remember that it does *not* mean here what it tends to mean today, namely 'conformity to conventional standards of behaviour'. •Smith often uses 'concord' as a musical metaphor, to express the idea of a satisfactory *match* between your sentiments and mine, in contrast to a discord or 'dissonance'. We'll see in due course that he uses musical metaphors a lot. e.g. here where we find 'flatten' (*f*). 'sharpness' (*f*), 'tone', 'harmony', and 'concord' in one short sentence.]

When someone's passions are in perfect concord with the sympathetic emotions of the spectator, they necessarily strike the spectator as being just and proper, and suitable to their •objects; and if on the other hand the spectator finds that when he brings the case home to himself those passions don't coincide with what he feels, they necessarily appear to him unjust and improper, and unsuitable to the •causes that arouse them. Expressing approval of someone's passions as suitable to their •objects is the same thing as saying that we entirely sympathize with them; and disapproving them as not suitable to their •objects is the same thing as saying that we don't entirely sympathize with them. [Smith does not distinguish a passion's 'object' from its 'cause'.] The man who resents the injuries that have been done to me, and sees that I resent them precisely as he does, necessarily approves of my resentment. . . . He who admires a picture or poem in the way I do must surely admit the justness of my admiration. He who laughs along with me at a joke can't very well deny the propriety of my laughter. And on the other hand, someone who in such cases either feels no emotion such as I feel, or feels none that have a level of intensity anywhere near to mine, can't avoid disapproving my sentiments because of their dissonance with his own. . . . If my grief exceeds what his most tender compassion can go along with, if my admiration is either too high or too low to fit with his, if I laugh heartily when he only smiles, or I only smile when he laughs heartily—in all these cases, as soon as he moves from considering the object to seeing how I am affected by it, I must incur some degree of his disapproval depending on how much disproportion there is between his sentiments and mine. On all occasions his own sentiments are the standards and measures by which he judges mine.

Approving of another man's opinions—adopting those opinions—they are the same thing! If the arguments that convince you convince me too, I necessarily approve of your conviction; and if they don't, I necessarily disapprove of it. . . . Everyone accepts that approving or disapproving of the **opinions** of others is observing the agreement or disagreement of those opinions with our own. Well, this is equally the case with regard to our approval or disapproval of the sentiments or passions of others.

[Smith mentions a class of counter-examples. •I see that the joke is funny and that I would ordinarily laugh at it, but right now I'm not in the mood for jokes. •Someone is pointed out to me on the street as grieving for the recent death of his father; I can't share in his grief, because I don't know him or his father; but I don't doubt that if I were fully informed of all the details of his situation I would fully and sincerely sympathize with him. Smith continues:] The basis for my approval of his sorrow is my consciousness of this *conditional* sympathy, although the actual sympathy doesn't take place. . . .

The sentiment or affection of the heart that leads to some action can be considered in two different relations: **(1)** in relation to the cause that arouses it, or the motive that gives rise to it; **(2)** in relation to the end that it proposes, or the effect that it tends to produce. [Smith builds into this one-sentence paragraph a striking clause saying that the 'whole virtue or vice' of the action 'must ultimately depend' on the sentiment or affection of the heart that leads to it. And in the next paragraph he says it again:]

The propriety or impropriety. . . .of the consequent action consists in the suitableness or unsuitableness, the proportion or disproportion, that the affection seems to bear to the cause or object that arouses it.

The merit or demerit of the action, the qualities by which it is entitled to reward or deserving of punishment, consists in the beneficial or harmful nature of the effects that the affection aims at or tends to produce.

In recent years philosophers have focussed on the •behavioural upshots of affections, to the neglect of an affection's relation to the •cause that arouses it. But in everyday life when we judge someone's conduct and the sentiments that directed it we constantly consider them under both these aspects. When we blame someone's excesses of love, of grief, of resentment, we consider not only the ruinous effects that they tend to produce but also the slightness of their causes. 'The merit of his favourite', we say, 'is not so great, his misfortune is not so dreadful, his provocation is

not so extraordinary, as to justify such violent passion. We would have approved or at least indulged the violence of his emotion if its cause had been anything like proportional to it.'

When in this way we judge any affection to be or not be proportional to the cause that arouses it, we are judging by the corresponding affection in ourselves when we bring the case home to our own breast—what other criterion could we possibly use?. . . .

A man uses each of his faculties as the standard by which he judges the same faculty in someone else. I judge your sight by my sight, your ear by my ear, your reason by my reason, your resentment by my resentment, your love by my love. I don't have—I *can't* have—any other way of judging them.

Chapter 4: The same subject continued

There are two different classes of cases in which we judge the propriety or impropriety of someone else's sentiments by their correspondence or disagreement with our own. **(1)** In one class, the objects that arouse the sentiments are considered without any special relation to ourselves or to the person whose sentiments we are judging. **(2)** In the other, those objects ·or causes· are considered as specially affecting one or other of us.

(1) With regard to objects that are considered without any special relation either to ourselves or to the person whose sentiments we are judging: wherever his sentiments entirely correspond with our own, we credit him with having taste and good judgment.

> The beauty of a plain,
> the greatness of a mountain,
> the ornaments of a building,
> the expression of a picture,
> the composition of a speech,
> the conduct of a third person,
> the proportions of different quantities and numbers,
> the various appearances that the great machine of the universe is perpetually exhibiting, with their secret causes

—all the general subjects of science and taste are what we and the other person regard as having no special relation to either of us. We both look at them from the same point of view, and we can produce the most perfect harmony of sentiments and affections without any help from sympathy or

the imaginary switch of situations from which sympathy arises. If despite this our affections are often different, this is either because •our different habits of life lead us to give different degrees of attention to the various parts of those complex objects, or •we differ in the natural acuteness of the mental faculties to which the objects are addressed.

When our companion's sentiments coincide with our own over things like this—things that are obvious and easy, things that everyone would respond to in the same way—we do of course approve of his sentiments, but they don't entitle him to praise or admiration. But when they don't just coincide with our own but lead and direct our own; when in forming them he appears to have attended to many things that we had overlooked, and to have made them responsive to all the various details of their objects; we not only approve of his sentiments but wonder and are surprised at their uncommon and unexpected acuteness and comprehensiveness. In this case he appears to deserve a high degree of •admiration and •applause. For approval heightened by wonder and surprise constitutes the sentiment that is properly called •'admiration', the natural expression of it being •applause. [In this next sentence and in many further places, 'ugliness' replaces Smith's 'deformity', and similarly with 'ugly' and 'deformed'. That clearly *is* what he means by 'deformed' and 'deformity'; like some other writers of his time he seems to have preferred those two words over 'ugly' and 'ugliness', which occur only once each in this entire work.] The verdict of the man who judges that exquisite beauty is preferable to gross ugliness, or that twice two are equal to four, must certainly be *approved* of by us all but surely we won't much *admire* it. What arouses our admiration, and seems to deserve our applause is

> •the acute and delicate discernment of the man of taste, who distinguishes the tiny barely perceptible differences of beauty and ugliness; and
>
> •the comprehensive accuracy of the experienced mathematician, who easily unravels the most intricate and puzzling proportions.

In short, the greater part of the praise we give to what are called 'the intellectual virtues' goes to the great leader in science and taste, the man who directs and leads our own sentiments, and fills us with astonished wonder and surprise by the extent and superior soundness of his talents.

You may think that what first recommend those talents to us is their utility; and no doubt the thought of their utility does give them a new value, once we get around to it. But at the start we approve of another man's

judgment not as •useful but as •right, precise, agreeable to truth and reality; and it's obvious that we attribute those qualities to his judgment simply because it agrees with our own. In the same way, taste is initially approved of not as •useful but as •just, delicate, and precisely suited to its object. The thought that such qualities as these are useful is clearly an after-thought, not what first recommends them to our approval.

[We are about to meet the word 'injury'. Its meaning in Smith's day was in one way •broader and in another •narrower than its meaning today. •It wasn't even slightly restricted to physical injury; it covered every kind of harm, though only when •the harm was caused by a person.]

(2) With regard to objects that affect in some special way either ourselves or the person whose sentiments we are judging, it's •harder to preserve this matching of sentiments and also •vastly more important to do so. ·**Harder**·: When I suffer some misfortune or am done some injury, my companion doesn't *naturally* take the same view of this as I do. It affects me much more nearly. He and I don't see it from the same vantage-point, as we do a picture, a poem, or a scientific theory, so we are apt to be differently affected by it. ·**More important**·: A lack of correspondence of our sentiments with regard to objects that don't concern either me or my companion is easier for me to take than such a lack with regard to something that concerns me as much as the misfortune that I have encountered or the injury that has been done to me. There's not much danger that you and I will quarrel over a picture, a poem, or even a scientific theory that I admire and you despise. Neither of us can reasonably care very much about them. They ought all of them to be matters of little significance to us both, so that although our opinions may be opposite we may still have friendly feelings towards one another. But it's quite otherwise with regard to objects by which one of us is especially affected. Though your judgments in matters of theory or your sentiments in matters of taste are quite opposite to mine, I can easily overlook this opposition; and if I'm not temperamentally angry and quarrelsome I may still enjoy conversation with you, even on those very subjects. But if you have no fellow-feeling for the misfortunes I have met with, or none that bears any proportion to the grief that is consuming me, or if you have no indignation at the injuries I have suffered, or none that bears any proportion to the resentment that is taking me over, the two of us can't talk together about this subject. We become intolerable to one another. . . . You are bewildered by my violence and passion, and I am enraged by your cold lack of feeling.

In any such case, what is needed for there to be some correspondence of sentiments between the spectator and his companion is for the spectator to try his hardest to put himself in the other man's situation and to bring home to himself every little detail of distress that could possibly have occurred to the sufferer. He must adopt the situation of his companion with all its tiniest details, and try to make as perfect as possible the imaginary change of situation on which his sympathy is based.

Even after all this, the spectator's emotions won't be as violent as the sufferer's. Although people are naturally sympathetic, they never respond to what has happened to another person with the level of passion that naturally animates that person himself. [A couple of dozen times Smith refers to the latter as 'the person principally concerned'. This will usually be replaced by the shorter 'the sufferer', a label that Smith also uses quite often.] The imaginary change of situation on which their sympathy is based is only momentary. The thought of their own safety, the thought that *they* aren't really the sufferers, continually pushes into their minds; and though this doesn't prevent them from having a passion somewhat analogous to what the sufferer feels, it does prevent them from coming anywhere near to matching the level of intensity of his passion. The sufferer is aware of this, while passionately wanting a more complete sympathy. He longs for the relief that he can only get from the perfect concord of the spectators' affections with his own. . . . But his only chance of getting this is to lower his passion to a level at which the spectators are capable of going along with him. He must flatten (if I may put it this way) the sharpness of his passion's natural tone so as to bring it into harmony and concord with the emotions of the people he is with. What they feel will always be in some respects different from what he feels. Compassion can never be exactly the same as original sorrow, because the sympathizer's secret awareness that he is only *imagining* being in the sufferer's position doesn't just lower the **degree** ·of intensity· of his sympathetic sentiment but also makes it somewhat different in **kind**. Still, it's clear that these two sentiments correspond with one another well enough for the harmony of society. They won't ever be unisons, but they can be concords, and this is all that is wanted or required.

In order to produce this concord, nature teaches the spectators to take on the situation of the sufferer, and teaches the sufferer to go some way in taking on the situation of the spectators. Just as they are continually placing themselves in his situation and thereby experiencing emotions similar to

his, so he is as constantly placing himself in their situation and thereby experiencing some degree of the coolness that he's aware they will have regarding his fortune. They constantly think about what they would feel if they actually were the sufferers, and he is constantly led to imagine how he would be affected if he were one of the spectators. . . . The effect of this is to lower the violence of his passion, especially when he is in their presence and under their observation.

A result of this is that the mind is rarely so disturbed that the company of a friend won't restore it to some degree of tranquillity. The breast is somewhat calmed and composed the moment we come into our friend's presence. . . . We expect less sympathy from an ordinary acquaintance than from a friend; we can't share with the acquaintance all the little details that we can unfold to a friend; so when we are with the acquaintance we calm down and try to fix our thoughts on the general outlines of our situation that he is willing to consider. We expect still less sympathy from a gathering of strangers, so in their presence we calm down even further, trying—as we always do—to bring down our passion to a pitch that the people we are with may be expected to go along with. We don't just *seem to* calm down. If we are at all masters of ourselves, the presence of a mere acquaintance really will compose us more than that of a friend; and the presence of a gathering of strangers will compose us even more.

So, at any time when the mind has lost its tranquillity, the best **cures** are •society and •conversation. They are also the best **preservatives** of the balanced and happy frame of mind that is so necessary for self-satisfaction and enjoyment. Scholarly recluses who are apt to sit at home brooding over either grief or resentment, though they may have more humaneness, more generosity, and a more delicate sense of honour, seldom possess the evenness of temperament that is so common among men of the world.

Chapter 5: The likeable virtues and the respectworthy virtues

We have here two different efforts—**(1)** the spectator's effort to enter into the sentiments of the sufferer, and **(2)** the sufferer's efforts to bring his emotions down to a level where the spectator can go along with them. These are the bases for two different sets of virtues. **(1)** One is the basis for the soft, gentle, likeable virtues, the virtues of openness to others and indulgent humaneness. **(2)** The other is the source of the great, awe-inspiring and respectworthy virtues, the virtues of self-denial and self-

control—i.e. the command of our passions that subjects all the movements of our nature to the requirements of our own dignity and honour, and the propriety of our own conduct. [Smith's words are 'amiable' and 'respectable', but their present meanings—especially of 'respectable'—would make them too distracting. Regarding 'propriety': remind yourself of the note here.]

(1) Someone whose sympathetic heart seems to echo all the sentiments of those he is in contact with, who grieves for their calamities, resents their injuries, and rejoices at their good fortune—how *likeable* he seems to be! When we bring home to ourselves the situation of his companions, we enter into their gratitude and feel what consolation they must get from the tender sympathy of such an affectionate friend. As for someone whose hard and stubborn heart feels for no-one but himself, and who has no sense of the happiness or misery of others—how disagreeable he seems to be! Here again we enter into the pain that his presence must give to everyone who has anything to do with him, and especially to those with whom we are most apt to sympathize, the unfortunate and the injured.

(2) Now consider someone who, in his own case, exerts the togetherness and self-control that constitute the dignity of every passion, bringing it down to what others can enter into—what noble propriety and grace do we feel in his conduct! We're disgusted with the clamorous grief that bluntly calls on our compassion with sighs and tears and begging lamentations. But we reverence the reserved, silent, majestic sorrow that reveals itself only in the swelling of the eyes, in the quivering of the lips and cheeks, and in the distant yet touching coolness of the whole behaviour. It imposes the same silence on us. We regard it with respectful attention, and keep a cautious watch on our own behaviour lest we should do anything to disturb the over-all tranquillity that it takes such an effort to maintain.

On the other side, there is nothing more detestable than the insolence and brutality of the anger of someone who indulges its fury without check or restraint. [We are about to meet the word 'generous', used—as it often is by Smith—in a sense that it doesn't often have today: 'noble-minded, magnanimous, free from meanness or prejudice'.] But we admire the noble and generous resentment that •governs its pursuit of ·the author of· great injuries not by the rage that such injuries are apt to arouse in the breast of the sufferer, but by the indignation that they naturally call forth in the breast of an impartial spectator; that •allows no word or gesture to escape it that wouldn't be dictated by this more equitable sentiment [i.e. by the feelings of an impartial spectator]; that •never, even in thought,

attempts any greater vengeance or wants to inflict any greater punishment than what every person who isn't directly involved would be happy to see inflicted.

·Putting those two sets of virtues together· we get the result that to feel much for others and little for ourselves, to restrain our selfish affections and indulge our benevolent affections, constitutes the perfection of human nature. It is only through this that men can have the harmony of sentiments and passions that constitutes their whole grace and propriety. The great law of Christianity is

Love your neighbour as you love yourself;

and the great precept of nature is

Love yourself only as you love your neighbour

—or, what comes to the same thing, as your neighbour is capable of loving you.

Just as taste and good judgment, when considered as qualities that deserve praise and admiration, are supposed to imply an uncommon delicacy of sentiment and acuteness of understanding, so the virtues of sensitivity and self-control are thought of as consisting in uncommon degrees of those qualities. The likeable virtue of humaneness requires, surely, a level of sensitivity far higher than is possessed by crude ordinary people. The great and exalted virtue of magnanimity undoubtedly demands a much higher degree of self-control than the weakest of mortals could exert. Just as the common level of intellect doesn't involve any notable talents, so the common level of moral qualities doesn't involve any virtues. Virtue is *excellence*—something uncommonly great and beautiful, rising far above what is vulgar and ordinary. The likeable virtues consist in a degree of sensitivity that surprises us by its exquisite and unexpected delicacy and tenderness. The awe-inspiring and respectworthy virtues consist in a degree of self-control that astonishes us by its amazing superiority over the most ungovernable passions of human nature.

We here encounter the considerable difference between •virtue and mere •propriety; between the qualities and actions that deserve to be •admired and celebrated, and the qualities that merely deserve to be •approved of. To act with the most perfect propriety often requires no more than the common and ordinary degree of sensitivity or self-control that even the most worthless of mankind have, and sometimes not even *that* is needed. To give a humdrum example: in ordinary circumstances if you are hungry it is

perfectly right and proper for you to eat, and everyone would agree about that; but no-one would call your eating virtuous!

·Thus, there can be perfect propriety without virtue. And there can also be virtue without perfect propriety·. Actions that fall short of perfect propriety often have a good deal of virtue in them, because they are nearer to perfection than could well be expected in a context where perfection of conduct would be extremely difficult to attain; this is often the case in situations calling for the greatest efforts of self-control. Some situations put so much pressure on human nature that none of us, imperfect creatures that we are, is capable of the degree of self-control that is ·called for. I mean: the degree that is needed· to silence the voice of human weakness, or reduce the violence of the passions to a level where the impartial spectator can entirely share them. In such a case, though the sufferer's behaviour falls short of the most perfect propriety, it may deserve some applause and even qualify as (in a certain sense) 'virtuous', because it shows an effort of high-mindedness and magnanimity that most men are not capable of. . . .

In cases of this kind, when we are settling how much blame or applause an action deserves, we often use two different standards. **(1)** One standard is the idea of complete propriety and perfection, which in these difficult situations no human conduct could ever achieve. . . . **(2)** The other standard is the idea of the nearness to this complete perfection that the actions of most men commonly achieve. Whatever goes beyond this seems to deserve applause, and whatever falls short of it to deserve blame.

[Smith adds a paragraph about a similar double standard in judging works of art that 'address themselves to the imagination': •the idea of complete but not humanly attainable perfection that the critic has in his mind, and •the idea of how near to complete perfection most works of art get.]

Section 2: The degrees of the different passions that are consistent with propriety

Introduction

For a passion aroused by an object that is specially related to oneself, the proper level of intensity—the level at which the spectator can go along with it—is clearly somewhere in the middle [Smith: '. . . must lie in a certain mediocrity']. If the passion is too high, or too low, the spectator can't enter into it. Grief and resentment for private misfortunes and injuries can easily be too high, and in most people they are. They aren't often too low, but this can happen. We call too-high passion 'weakness' and 'fury', and we call too-low passion 'stupidity', 'insensibility', and 'lack of spirit'. We can't enter into either of them, and are astonished and confused to see them.

This middling level that is needed for propriety is different for different passions. It is high for some, low for others. **(1)** There are some passions that it is indecent to •express very strongly, even when it is acknowledged that we can't avoid •feeling them in the highest degree. **(2)** And there are others of which the strongest •expressions are often ·so proper as to count as· extremely graceful, even though the passions themselves aren't necessarily •felt so strongly. The **(1)** passions are the ones with which, for certain reasons, there is little or no sympathy; the **(2)** passions are those with which, for other reasons, there is the greatest sympathy. And if we consider the whole range of passions that human nature is capable of, we'll find that they are regarded as decent (or indecent) exactly in proportion as mankind are more (or less) disposed to sympathize with them.

Chapter 1: The passions that originate in the body

(1) It is indecent to express any strong degree of •the passions that arise from a certain situation or disposition of one's body, because the people one is with aren't in that bodily state and so can't be expected to sympathize with •them. Violent hunger, for example, though on many occasions it's not only natural but unavoidable, is always indecent, and to eat voraciously is universally regarded as a piece of ill manners. Still, there is some level of sympathy even with hunger. It is agreeable to see our companions eat with a •good appetite; any expression of •loathing for the food one has tasted is offensive. A healthy man's normal bodily state makes his stomach easily

keep time (forgive the coarseness!) with •one and not with •the other. We can sympathize with the distress of excessive hunger when we read the description of a siege or sea-voyage. Imagining ourselves in the situation of the sufferers, we can easily conceive the •grief, fear and consternation that must necessarily distract them. We ourselves feel some degree of •those passions, and therefore sympathize with them; but reading the description doesn't make us hungry, so it's not strictly accurate to say that we sympathize with their hunger.

It's the same with the passion by which Nature unites the sexes. Though it is naturally the most furious of all the passions, strong expressions of it are *always* indecent, even between persons who are totally allowed, by human and divine laws, to indulge this passion together. Still, there seems to be some degree of sympathy even with this passion. It is not proper to talk to a woman as we would to a man; it is expected that their company should inspire us with more gaiety, more pleasantry, and more attention; and an entire insensibility to the fair sex makes a man somewhat contemptible even to men. [This paragraph seems to run together •sympathy with my female companion's sexual feelings with •sensitivity to the fact that my companion is female. This oddity is present in the original; it's not an artifact of this version.]

We have such an aversion for all the appetites that originate in the body that we find all strong expressions of them loathsome and disagreeable. Some ancient philosophers held that these are the passions that we share with the lower animals, so that they are beneath our dignity because they have no connection with the characteristic qualities of *human* nature. But there are many other passions that we have in common with the lower animals—e.g. resentment, natural affection, even gratitude—that don't strike us as animal-like. The real cause of the special disgust we have for the body's appetites when we see them in other men is that we can't enter into them, ·can't sympathize with them·. To the person who has such a passion, as soon as it is gratified the object that aroused it ceases to be agreeable; even its presence often becomes offensive to him; he looks in vain for the charm that swept him away the moment before, and he can't now enter into his own passion any more than anyone else can. After we have dined, we order the table to be cleared; and we would treat in the same manner the objects of the most ardent and passionate desires if they were the objects *only* of passions that originate in the body.

The virtue of temperance, properly so-called, is the command of the body's appetites. •Prudence involves keeping those appetites within the limits required by •a concern for one's health and fortune. But •temperance keeps them within the limits required by •grace, propriety, delicacy, and modesty.

(2) It's for that same reason that it always seems unmanly and unbecoming to cry out with bodily pain, however intolerable it is. Yet there is a good deal of sympathy even with bodily pain. I remarked earlier that if I see a truncheon about to come down on someone else's arm, I naturally shrink and draw back my own arm; and when the blow falls I feel it in some measure, and I am hurt by it as well as the sufferer. But *my* hurt is very slight, so that if he makes a violent outcry I will despise him because I can't go along with him. That's how it is with all the passions that originate in the body; they arouse ·in the spectator· either no sympathy at all or such a low level of sympathy that it is altogether disproportionate to the violence of what the sufferer feels.

It is quite otherwise with passions that originate in the imagination. The state of my •body can't be much affected by changes that are brought about in my companion's body; but my •imagination is more pliable, and (so to speak) more readily takes on the shape and lay-out of the imaginations of people I have contact with. That's why a disappointment in love or ambition will evoke more sympathy than the greatest bodily evil. Those passions arise purely from the imagination. The person who has lost his whole fortune, if he is in good health, feels nothing in his body. What he suffers comes entirely from his imagination, which represents to him the rapid approach of the loss of his dignity, neglect by his friends, contempt from his enemies, dependency, poverty and misery; and we sympathize with him more strongly on account of this misfortune ·than we do for any physical pain he is suffering· because it's easier for our imaginations to mould themselves on his imagination than for our bodies to mould themselves on his body.

The loss of a leg may generally be regarded as a more real calamity than the loss of a mistress. Yet it would be a ridiculous ·dramatic· tragedy of which the ·central· catastrophe was to concern the loss of a leg; whereas a misfortune of the other kind, however trivial it may appear to be, has given occasion to many a fine tragic drama.

Nothing is as quickly forgotten as pain. The moment it is gone the whole agony of it is over, and the thought of it can no longer give us any sort of disturbance. After the pain is over, we ourselves can't enter into the anxiety and anguish that we had during it. An unguarded word from a friend will cause a more durable unhappiness—the agony it creates is by no means over once the word has gone. What at first disturbs us is not the object of the senses (·the sound of the word·) but the idea of the imagination (·the meaning of the word·); and just because it is an idea, the thought of it continues to fret and ruffle the imagination until time and other episodes in some measure erase it from our memory, . Pain never evokes any lively sympathy unless danger comes with it. We sympathize with sufferer's fear but not with his agony. Fear is a passion derived entirely from the imagination, which represents not what we really now feel but what we *may* suffer later on. (It represents this in an uncertain and fluctuating way, but that only makes it worse.) The gout or the tooth-ache, though intensely painful, arouse little sympathy; more dangerous diseases, even when accompanied by little pain, arouse sympathy in the highest degree.

Some people faint and grow sick at the sight of a surgical operation; the bodily pain caused by tearing the flesh seems to arouse the most excessive sympathy in them. We do conceive in a much more lively and distinct manner the pain that comes from an external cause than pain coming from an internal disorder. I can hardly form an idea of my neighbour's agonies when he is tortured by gout or a gallstone; but I have the clearest conception of what he must suffer from an incision, a wound, or a fracture. But the main reason why such objects produce such violent effects on us ·as spectators· is that we aren't used to them. Someone who has seen a dozen dissections and as many amputations will from then on see all operations of this kind with great calmness and often with no feeling at all for the sufferer. . . . Some of the Greek tragedies try to arouse compassion by representing the agonies of bodily pain. Philoctetes cries out and faints from the extremity of his sufferings. Hippolytus and Hercules are both introduced as dying from the severest tortures—ones that seem to have been more than even the fortitude of Hercules could bear. But in all these cases, what concerns us is not the pain but other features of the situation. What affects us is not Philoctetes's sore foot but his solitude, which diffuses over that charming tragedy the romantic wildness that is so agreeable to the imagination. The agonies of Hercules and Hippolytus are interesting only

because we foresee that death will result from them. If those heroes recovered, we would think the representation of their sufferings to have been perfectly ridiculous. . . . These attempts to arouse compassion by the representation of bodily pain may be regarded as among the Greek theatre's greatest failures of good manners.

The propriety of constancy and patience in enduring bodily pain is based on the fact that we feel little sympathy with such pain. The man who under the severest tortures allows no weakness to escape him, who doesn't utter a groan or give way to any passion that we ·spectators· don't entirely enter into, commands our highest admiration. His firmness enables him to keep time with our indifference and insensibility. We admire and entirely go along with the magnanimous effort that he makes for this purpose. We •approve of his behaviour, and our experience of the common weakness of human nature makes us •surprised by it, and we wonder what enabled him to act so as to deserve approval. Approval, mixed with an enlivening input of wonder and surprise, constitutes the sentiment that is properly called 'admiration', of which applause—I repeat—is the natural expression.

Chapter 2: The passions that originate in a particular turn or habit of the imagination

Even some of the passions derived from the imagination get little sympathy, although they may be acknowledged to be perfectly natural. I'm talking about passions that originate in a special turn or habit that the imagination has acquired. The imaginations of people in general, not having acquired that particular turn, can't enter into these passions. The passions in question, though they may be allowed to be almost unavoidable in some part of life, are always somewhat ridiculous. An example is the strong attachment that naturally grows up between two persons of different sexes who have long fixed their thoughts on one another. Because our imagination hasn't run in the same channel as the lover's, we can't enter into the eagerness of his emotions. •If our friend has been injured, we readily sympathize with his resentment and grow angry with the person with whom he is angry. •If he has received a benefit, we readily enter into his gratitude and have a high sense of the merit of his benefactor. But •if he is in love, even though we may think his passion is just as reasonable as any of that kind, we don't think ourselves bound to develop a passion of the same kind and for the same person that he is in love with. To everyone but the lover himself his passion seems entirely disproportionate to the value of its object; and love,

though it is •pardoned. . . .because we know it is natural, is always •laughed at because we can't enter into it. All serious and strong expressions of it appear ridiculous to a third person; and a lover isn't good company to anyone else except his mistress. He himself is aware of this, and during his periods of being in his sober senses he tries to treat his own passion with mockery and ridicule. That is the only style in which we care to •hear of it, because it's the only style in which we ourselves are disposed to •talk of it. We grow weary of the solemn, pedantic, long-winded lovers of Cowley and of Petrarch, who go on *and on* exaggerating the violence of their attachments; but the gaiety of Ovid and the gallantry of Horace are always agreeable.

But though we feel no proper sympathy with an attachment of this kind, though we never get close to *imagining* ourselves as in love with that particular person, ·we aren't entirely cut off from the lover's situation·. We have ourselves fallen in love in that way, or are disposed to do so; and that lets us readily enter into the high hopes of happiness that the lover expects from his love's gratification, as well as into the intense distress that he fears from its disappointment. It concerns us not as a passion but as a situation that gives rise to other passions that concern us—to hope, fear, and distress of every kind. (Similarly, when we read about a sea voyage, our concern is not with the hunger but with the distress that the hunger causes.) Without properly entering into the lover's attachment, we readily go along with the expectations of romantic happiness that he gets from it. We feel how natural it is for the mind, at a time when it is lazily relaxed and fatigued with the violence of desire,

> to long for serenity and quiet, to hope to find them in the gratification of the passion that distracts it, and to form for itself the idea of a life of pastoral tranquillity and retirement of the sort that the elegant, tender, and passionate ·Latin poet· Tibullus takes so much pleasure in describing—a life like the one the ·ancient· poets describe in the Fortunate Islands, a life of friendship, liberty, and repose; free from labour, from care, and from all the turbulent passions that accompany them.

Even scenes of this kind engage us most when they are depicted as •hoped for rather than •actually enjoyed. The grossness of the passion that is mixed in with love and is perhaps its foundation disappears when its gratification is far off and at a distance; but when it is described as what is immediately

possessed it makes the whole description offensive. For this reason [he means: because of the grossness of lust] we are less drawn into the lover's happy passion than we are to the fearful and the melancholy ·aspects of it·. We tremble for whatever can disappoint such natural and agreeable hopes, and thus enter into all the anxiety, concern, and distress of the lover.

[Smith now has a paragraph applying this line of thought to the presentation of romantic love 'in some modern tragedies and romances'. Then:]

The reserve that the laws of society impose on the female sex with regard to this weakness [i.e. with regard to romantic love] makes it especially stressful for them; and for just that reason we are more deeply concerned with their part in a love situation. We are charmed with the •love of Phaedra as it is expressed in Racine's *Phèdre*, despite all the extravagance and guilt that come with it. That very extravagance and guilt are part of what recommends •it to us. Her fear, shame, remorse, horror, despair, become thereby more natural and engaging. All the secondary passions (if I may be allowed to call them that) that arise from the situation of love become necessarily more furious and violent, and it's only with these secondary passions that we can properly be said to sympathize.

However, of all the passions that are so extravagantly disproportionate to the value of their objects, love is the only one that appears to have anything in it that is either graceful or agreeable. (None of the others do, even to the weakest minds!) ·It has three things going for it·:

- •Although it may be ridiculous, it isn't naturally odious.
- •Although its consequences are often fatal and dreadful its intentions are seldom bad.
- •Although there is little propriety in the passion itself, there's a good deal of propriety in some of the passions that always accompany it.

There is in love a strong mixture of humaneness, generosity, kindness, friendship, esteem. And *these* are the passions that we are most disposed to sympathize with, even when we're aware that they are somewhat excessive. The sympathy that we feel with them makes the passion that they accompany less disagreeable and supports it in our imagination, despite all the vices that commonly go along with it: always eventual ruin and infamy for the woman; and for the man—though he is supposed to come off more lightly—it usually causes inability to work, neglect of duty, disregard of ·lost· reputation. [In the original, as in this version, Smith doesn't signal where he is switching

from romantic love generally to what he is evidently thinking of here—consummated romantic love between two people who are not married to one another.] Despite all this, the degree of sensibility and generosity that is supposed to accompany such love makes it something that some people are vain about—they like to appear to be capable of a feeling that would do them no honour if they really did have it.

It's for this kind of reason that a certain reserve is necessary when we talk of our own friends, our own studies, our own professions. We can't expect our companions to be as interested in these topics as we are. And it's because of a lack of this reserve that one half of mankind make bad company for the other half. A philosopher is good company only to another philosopher; the member of a club is good company only to his own little knot of companions.

Chapter 3: The unsocial passions

There is another set of passions which, though derived from the imagination, have to be scaled down if we are to be able to enter into them or regard them as graceful or becoming; I mean scaled down to a much lower level than undisciplined nature gives them. These are •hatred and •resentment, with all their varieties. With all such passions our sympathy is divided between the person who feels them and the person who is the object of them. The interests of these two are directly opposite. What our sympathy with the person who feels the passion would prompt us to •wish for is something that our fellow-feeling with the other person would lead us to •fear. Because they are both human we are concerned for both, and our fear for what one may suffer damps our resentment for what the other has suffered. So our sympathy with the man who has received the provocation has to fall short of the passion that naturally animates him, not only for the general reason that all sympathetic passions are inferior to the original ones, but also for the special reason that in this case we also have an opposite sympathy towards someone else. That is why resentment, more than almost any other passion, can't become graceful and agreeable unless it is humbled and brought down below the pitch to which it would naturally rise.

Any human being has a strong sense of the injuries that are done to anyone else; the villain in a tragedy or romance is as much an object of our indignation as the hero is an object of our sympathy and affection. We detest Iago as much as we esteem Othello; and we delight as much in Iago's punishment as we grieve over Othello's distress. But although we have such

a strong fellow-feeling with the injuries that are done to our brethren, it's not always the case that our resentment grows if the sufferer's grows. ·On the contrary·, the •greater his patience, mildness, and humaneness, the •greater our resentment against the person who injured him—provided that his patience etc. doesn't seem to show that he is afraid or that he lacks spirit. The likeableness of the sufferer's character intensifies our sense of the atrocity of the injury.

However, those passions are regarded as necessary elements in human nature. A person becomes contemptible if he tamely sits still and submits to insults without trying to repel or revenge them. We can't enter into his indifference and insensibility. We regard his behaviour as mean-spirited, and are really provoked by it, just as much as we are by the insolence of his adversary. Even the mob are enraged to see any man submit patiently to insults and bullying. They want to see this insolence resented *by the person who suffers from it*. They angrily cry to him to defend or revenge himself. If his indignation eventually bubbles up, they heartily applaud, and sympathize with it. It enlivens their own indignation against his enemy, whom they rejoice to see him attack in his turn; and provided his revenge is not immoderate, they are as really gratified by it as they would be if the injury had been done to themselves.

•Those passions are useful to the individual, because they make it dangerous to insult or injure him; and, as I'll show later, •they are useful to the public as guardians of justice and of the equality of its administration; and yet •they have in themselves something disagreeable that makes it natural for us to dislike seeing them in other people. Suppose that we are in company, and someone insults me; if I express anger that goes beyond merely indicating that I noted the insult, that is regarded not only as an insult to him but also as a rudeness to the whole company. Respect for *them* ought to have restrained me from giving way to such a rowdy and offensive emotion. It's the •remote effects of these passions that are agreeable; the •immediate effects are mischief to the person against whom they are directed [Smith's phrase]. But what makes an object—·a passion or anything else·—agreeable or disagreeable to the imagination is its •immediate effect, not its •remote ones. A prison is certainly more useful to the public than a palace; and someone who establishes a prison is generally directed by a much sounder spirit of patriotism than someone who builds a palace. But the immediate effect of a prison—namely, the confinement of

the wretches shut up in it—is disagreeable; and the imagination either doesn't bother to trace out the remote consequences, or sees them from too great a distance to be much affected by them. So a prison will always be a disagreeable object; and the fitter it is for its intended purpose the *more* disagreeable it will be. A palace, on the other hand, will always be agreeable; and yet its remote effects may often be thoroughly bad for the public—e.g. promoting luxury, and setting an example of the dissolution of manners. [In Smith's day, 'luxury' stood for *very excessive* indulgence in physical comforts; see note here.]. . . . Paintings or models of the instruments of music or of agriculture make a common and an agreeable ornament of our halls and dining-rooms. A display of that kind composed of the instruments of surgery—dissecting and amputation-knives, saws for cutting the bones, trepanning instruments, etc.—would be absurd and shocking. Yet instruments of surgery are always more finely polished, and usually more exactly adapted to their intended purpose, than instruments of agriculture. And their •remote effect—the health of the patient—is agreeable. But because their •immediate effect is pain and suffering, the sight of them always displeases us. [Smith adds that swords and such are liked, associated with courage etc., and even wanted as fashion accessories. It's true that their immediate effects are pain and suffering, but only for 'our enemies, with whom we have no sympathy'. He continues:] It is the same with the qualities of the mind. The ancient stoics held that because the world was governed by the all-ruling providence of a wise, powerful, and good God, every single event ought to be regarded as a necessary part of the plan of the universe, and as tending to promote the general order and happiness of the whole; so that men's vices and follies were as necessary a part of this plan as their wisdom or their virtue. . . . No theory of this sort, however, no matter how deeply it might be rooted in the mind, could lessen our natural abhorrence for vice, whose immediate effects are so destructive and whose remote ones are too distant to be traced by the imagination.

It's the same with hatred and resentment. Their immediate effects are so disagreeable that even when the sufferer is absolutely entitled to them there's still something about them that disgusts us. That's why these are the only passions that we aren't inclined to sympathize with until we learn about the cause that arouses them. ·In contrast with that·, the plaintive •voice of misery, when heard at a distance, won't let us be indifferent about the person from whom it comes; as soon as we hear •it we are concerned

about his fortune, and if •it continues it almost *forces* us to rush to his assistance. The sight of a smiling face elevates even a brooding person into a cheerful and airy mood that disposes him to sympathize with the joy it expresses; and he feels his heart, which just then had been shrunk and depressed by thought and care, instantly expanded and elated. [Smith goes on at colourful length about the different effect on us of expressions of hatred and resentment. He concludes:] Grief powerfully •engages and attracts us to the person who is grieving; and hatred and resentment, while we are ignorant of their cause, equally powerfully •disgust and detach us from the person who has *them*. It seems to have been Nature's intention that the rougher and more dislikeable emotions that drive men apart should be less easily and more rarely passed on from man to man.

When music imitates the modulations of grief or joy, it inspires *us* with those passions, or at least puts us in a mood that disposes us to have them. But when it imitates the notes of anger, it inspires us ·not with anger but· with fear. Joy, grief, love, admiration, devotion, are all *naturally musical* passions. Their natural tones are all soft, clear, and melodious; and they naturally express themselves in phrases that are separated by regular pauses, which makes it easy to adapt them to them to the words of a song. In contrast with this, the voice of anger and of all the passions like it is harsh and discordant. Its phrases are all irregular, some long and others short, and not marked off by regular pauses. So it is hard for music to imitate any of those passions; and music that does so isn't the most agreeable. There would be no impropriety in making a complete concert out of imitations of the social and agreeable passions. It would be a strange entertainment that consisted of nothing but imitations of hatred and resentment!

Those passions are as disagreeable to the person who feels them as they are to the spectator. •Hatred and •anger are the greatest poison to the happiness of a good mind. In the very *feel* of them there is something harsh, jarring, and convulsive, something that tears and distracts the breast and is altogether destructive of the calmness of mind that is so necessary to happiness and is best promoted by the contrary passions of •gratitude and •love. What generous and humane people are most apt to regret ·when they are injured· is *not* the value of what they lose by the perfidy and ingratitude of those they live with. Whatever they may have lost, they can generally be happy without it. What disturbs them most is the idea of perfidy and ingratitude exercised towards themselves; and they regard the discordant

and disagreeable passions that *this* arouses as constituting the chief part of the injury that they suffer.

What does it take for the gratification of resentment to be completely agreeable, and to make the spectator thoroughly sympathize with our revenge? Well, the first thing is that the provocation must be such that if we didn't somewhat resent it we would be making ourselves contemptible and exposing ourselves to perpetual insults. Smaller offences are always better neglected; and there's nothing more despicable than the quarrelsome temperament that takes fire under the slightest provocation. ·Secondly·, we should resent more from a sense of the propriety of resentment—·i.e.· from a sense that mankind expect and require it of us—than because we feel in ourselves the furies of that disagreeable passion. With the passion of resentment—more than any other of which the human mind is capable—we ought to ask ourselves sceptically 'Is it all right for me to feel this?', letting our indulgence in it be subject to careful consultation with our natural sense of propriety, i.e. to diligent consideration of what will be the sentiments of the cool and impartial spectator. The only motive that can ennoble the expressions of this disagreeable passion is *magnanimity*, i.e. a concern to maintain our own rank and dignity in society. This motive must characterize our whole style and deportment. These must be plain, open, and direct; determined but not domineering, and elevated without insolence; not only free from petulance and low abusiveness, but generous, fair-minded, and full of all proper regard even for the person who has offended us. [In that sentence 'fair-minded' replaces Smith's 'candid'. He always uses it with that meaning, which is quite remote from what it means today.] In short, it must appear from our whole manner—without our laboriously making a special point of it—that our passion hasn't extinguished our humaneness, and that if we answer the call to get revenge we do so with reluctance, from necessity, and in consequence of great and repeated provocations. When resentment is guarded and qualified in this manner it can even count as generous [see note here] and noble.

Chapter 4: The social passions

I have just been discussing a set of passions that are on most occasions ungraceful and disagreeable, being made so ·in large measure· by the •divided sympathy that they evoke. Now we come to an opposite set of passions—ones that are nearly always especially agreeable and becoming, being made so by the •redoubled sympathy that they evoke. Generosity,

humaneness, kindness, compassion, mutual friendship and esteem—*all* the social and benevolent affections—when expressed in someone's face or behaviour, even towards people who aren't specially connected with ourselves, please us on almost every occasion. The impartial spectator's sympathy with the person x who feels those passions exactly coincides with his concern for the person y who is the object of them. Just by being a man, the spectator is obliged to have a concern for y's happiness, and this concern enlivens his fellow-feeling with x's sentiments, which also aim at y's happiness. So we always have the strongest disposition to sympathize with the benevolent affections. They strike us as in every respect agreeable. We enter into the satisfaction of the person who feels them *and* of the person who is the object of them. Just as

> being an object of hatred and indignation gives more pain than all the evil that a brave man can fear from his enemies,

so also

> for a person with fine and sensitive feelings, the awareness that he is loved brings a satisfaction that does more for his happiness than any ·practical· advantage he can expect to derive from being loved.

The most detestable character is that of the person who takes pleasure in sowing dissension among friends, turning their most tender love into mortal hatred. But what makes this so atrocious? Is it that it deprives them of the trivial good turns they might have expected from one another if friendship had continued? ·Of course not·! It's the fact that it deprives them of *that friendship itself*, robbing them of each other's affections, from which both derived so much satisfaction; disturbing the harmony of their hearts and ending the happy relations that had previously held between them. •These affections, that harmony, these inter-relations, are felt—not only by tender and delicate people but also by the roughest ordinary folk—to be more important for happiness than all the little services that could be expected to flow from •them.

The sentiment of love is in itself agreeable to the person who feels it. It soothes and calms his breast, and seems. . . .to promote the healthy state of his constitution; and it is made still more delightful by his awareness of the gratitude and satisfaction that his love must arouse in the person who is the object of it. Their mutual regard makes them happy with one another, and this mutual regard, added to sympathy, makes them agreeable to everyone else. Take the case of

> a family where mutual love and esteem hold sway throughout; where the parents and children are companions for one another, with no differences except what come from the children's respectful affection and the parents' kind indulgence; where freedom and fondness, mutual teasing and mutual kindness, show that the brothers are not divided by any opposition of their interests, or the sisters by any rivalry for parental favour; and where everything presents us with the idea of peace, cheerfulness, harmony, and contentment.

What pleasure we get from seeing a family like that! Then consider being a visitor to

> a household in which jarring contention sets half of the members against the other half; where, along with the surface appearance of smoothness and good temper, suspicious looks and sudden flashes of passion reveal the mutual jealousies that burn within them, ready at any moment to burst out through all the restraints that the presence of visitors imposes.

What an unpleasant experience that is!

The likeable passions, even when they are clearly excessive, are never regarded with aversion. There's something agreeable even in the *excess* of friendship and humaneness. The too tender mother, the too indulgent father, the too generous and affectionate friend, may be looked on with a sort of pity, though there's love mixed in with it; and they can never be regarded with hatred and aversion, or even with contempt, except by the most brutal and worthless of mankind. When we blame them for the extravagance of their attachment, we always do it with concern, with sympathy and kindness. [Smith goes on to say that our only regret regarding any extreme case of the social passions is 'that it is unfit for the world because the world is unworthy of it', so that the person in question is too open to abuse and ingratitude that he doesn't deserve and couldn't easily bear. He contrasts this with our much more robust disapproval of extreme hatred and resentment.]

Chapter 5: The selfish passions

Besides those two opposite sets of passions, the social and the unsocial, there's a third that occupies a sort of middle place between them: it's a kind of passion that is never as graceful as the social passions sometimes are, or as odious as the unsocial passions sometimes are. This third set of passions

consists of *grief and joy that people have on account of their own private good or bad fortune*. Even when excessive, these passions are never as disagreeable as excessive resentment,

- because no **opposing** sympathy can ever make us want to oppose them,

and even when they are most suitable to their objects, these passions are never as agreeable as impartial humanity and just benevolence, because

- no **double** sympathy can ever make us want to support them.

There's this difference between grief and joy: we are generally most disposed to sympathize with small joys and great sorrows. A man who by some sudden stroke of luck is instantly raised into a condition of life far above what he had formerly lived in can be sure that the congratulations of his best friends aren't all perfectly sincere. An upstart—even if he is of the greatest merit—is generally disagreeable to us, and a sentiment of envy commonly prevents us from heartily sympathizing with his joy. If he has any judgment he is aware of this, ·and conducts himself accordingly·. Instead of appearing to be elated with his good fortune, he does his best to smother his joy, and keep down the mental *lift* he is getting, naturally, from his new circumstances. He dresses as plainly as ever, and displays the same modesty of behaviour that was suitable to him in his former station. He redoubles his attention to his old friends, and tries more than ever to be humble, attentive, and obliging. And this is the behaviour that we most approve of in someone in his situation—apparently because we look to him to have more •sympathy with our envy and aversion to his happiness than we have •sympathy with his happiness! He hardly ever succeeds in all this. We suspect the sincerity of his humility, and he grows weary of this constraint. Before long, he leaves all his old friends behind him, except perhaps some of the poorest of them, who are willing to lower themselves to the level of becoming his dependents. And he doesn't always acquire new friends; the pride of his new acquaintances is as much offended at finding him their equal as the pride of his old ones had been offended by his becoming their superior; and he'll have to put up the most obstinate and persevering ·show of· modesty to atone for either offence. He generally grows weary too soon, and is provoked by the sullen and suspicious pride of his old friends to treat them with neglect, by the saucy contempt of his new acquaintances to treat them with petulance, until eventually he forms a habit of insolence, and isn't respected by anyone. If the chief part of human

happiness comes from the consciousness of being beloved, as I think it does, these *sudden* changes of fortune seldom contribute much to happiness. The happiest man is one who advances more gradually to greatness, whose every step upwards is widely predicted before he reaches it, so that when his success comes it can't arouse extravagant •joy in himself, and can't reasonably create •jealousy in those he overtakes or •envy in those he leaves behind.

We are more apt to sympathize with smaller joys flowing from less imposing causes. It is decent to be humble amidst great prosperity; but we can hardly overdo our expressions of satisfaction in all the little occurrences of common life—the company we had yesterday evening, the entertainment that was provided for us, what was said and what was done, all the little incidents of the present conversation, and all the trivial nothings that fill up the void of human life. Nothing is more graceful than habitual cheerfulness, which is always based on a special liking for all the little pleasures that everyday events provide. We readily sympathize with it; it inspires us with the same joy, and makes every trifle present to us the same agreeable aspect that it presents to the person endowed with this happy disposition. That is why youth, the time of gaiety, so easily engages our affections. The propensity for joy that seems. . . .to sparkle from the eyes of youth and beauty—even in a person of the same sex—raises even elderly people to a more joyous mood than ordinary. They forget their infirmities for a while, and give themselves over to agreeable ideas and emotions to which they have long been strangers, but which return to their breast when the presence of so much happiness calls them back—like old acquaintances from whom they are sorry to have ever been parted, and whom they embrace all the more heartily because of this long separation.

[Several occurrences of 'teasing' that we are about to meet—like one here—are replacements for Smith's 'raillery', which means something like 'lighted-hearted unaggressive mockery'.] It is quite otherwise with grief. Small vexations arouse no sympathy, but deep affliction calls forth the greatest. The man who is made uneasy by every little disagreeable incident. . . .will seldom meet with much sympathy. [Smith builds into that sentence sketches of *eight* such trivial incidents.] Joy is a pleasant emotion, and we gladly give ourselves over to it on the slightest occasion. So we readily sympathize with it in others except when we are prejudiced by envy. But grief is painful, and the mind naturally resists and recoils from it—and that includes resisting being grieved by

one's own misfortunes. We try either not to be grieved at all, or to shake our grief off as soon as it comes over us. It's true that our aversion to grief won't *always* stop us from grieving over trifling troubles that we meet, but it *constantly* prevents us from sympathizing with the grief that others have because of similar trivial causes. ·How can there be that difference?· It's because our •sympathetic passions are always easier to resist than our •original ones. Also, human nature includes a malice that not only •prevents all sympathy with little unhappinesses but •makes them somewhat amusing. Hence the delight we all take in teasing, and in the small vexation that we observe in our companion when he is pushed, and urged, and teased on all sides. [Smith adds details about how such matters are managed in society. A 'man who lives in the world', he says, stays in tune with his social surroundings by teasing *himself* regarding trivial calamities [Smith calls them 'frivolous calamities'] that befall him.]

On the other side, our sympathy with deep distress is strong and sincere. You don't need me to give examples. We weep even at the representation of a tragedy on the stage. So if you are labouring under some notable calamity, if through some extraordinary misfortune you have fallen into poverty, disease, disgrace or ·major· disappointment, you can generally depend on the sincerest sympathy of all your friends, and on their kindest assistance too as far as their interests and honour will permit; and that holds even if the trouble was partly your own fault. But if your misfortune is not of this dreadful kind, if you have merely been a little blocked in your ambition, if you have only been jilted by your mistress, or are only hen-pecked by your wife, you can reckon on being teased by everyone you know!

Section 3: How prosperity and adversity affect our judgments about the rightness of actions; and why it is easier to win our approval in prosperity than in adversity

Chapter 1: The intensity-difference between joy and sympathy with joy is less than the intensity-difference between sorrow and sympathy with sorrow

Our sympathy with sorrow has been more taken notice of than our sympathy with joy, though it's no more real than that. The word 'sympathy', in its most strict and basic meaning, denotes our fellow-feeling with the sufferings of others, not with their enjoyments. . . .

Our sympathy with sorrow is in some sense more universal than our sympathy with joy. Even when sorrow is excessive, we may still have some fellow-feeling with it. What we feel then doesn't amount to the complete sympathy, the perfect harmony and matching of sentiments, that constitutes *approval*. We don't weep and exclaim and lament with the sufferer. We're conscious of his weakness and of the extravagance of his passion, and yet we often have a definite feeling of concern on his account. But if we don't *entirely* enter into and go along with a person's joy, we have *no* sort of regard or fellow-feeling for it. We have contempt and indignation for the man who dances about with an intemperate and senseless joy that we can't accompany him in.

It's also relevant that pain, whether of mind or body, is a more *forceful* [Smith: 'pungent'] sensation than pleasure; and our sympathy with pain, though it falls well short of what is naturally felt by the sufferer, is usually a more lively and distinct perception than our sympathy with pleasure, despite the fact that our sympathy with pleasure often comes close to the natural vivacity of the original passion.

Over and above all this, we often struggle to keep down our sympathy with the sorrow of others. When we aren't in the presence of the sufferer we try for our own sakes to suppress it as much as we can. We don't always succeed, ·because· the opposition that we put up to sympathetic sorrow and the reluctance with which we give in to it force us to be more explicitly aware of it. In contrast, we never have occasion to put up such opposition to our sympathy with joy. Whenever there's any envy in the case, we don't feel the slightest propensity towards joy; but if there's no envy we give way to joy without any reluctance. When we are envious we are always ashamed

of being so, which is why we often *say* that we sympathize with someone's joy (and perhaps even *wish* we could do so) when we are really disqualified from doing so by that disagreeable sentiment, envy. We are glad about our neighbour's good fortune, we say, when in our hearts we may be really sorry. We often feel sympathy with sorrow when we would prefer not to; and we often *don't* sympathize with joy when we would be glad to do so. Given all these facts, it is natural to be led to the conclusion that our propensity to sympathize with sorrow must be very strong, and our inclination to sympathize with joy very weak.

Despite this snap judgment, however, I venture to say that when no envy is involved our propensity to sympathize with joy is much stronger than our propensity to sympathize with sorrow; and that our fellow-feeling for the agreeable emotion comes much closer to the liveliness of what is naturally felt by rejoicing person than our fellow-feeling for someone's sorrow comes to his own sorrow.

We somewhat indulge excessive grief that we can't entirely go along with. We know what an enormous effort it takes for the sufferer to bring his emotion down to a level of complete harmony with what the spectator feels. So if he fails in that, it's easy for us to pardon him. But we have no such indulgence for intemperate joy, because we have no sense that any such vast effort is needed to bring *that* down to what we ·spectators· can entirely enter into. The man who can command his sorrow under the greatest calamities seems worthy of the highest admiration; but someone who can master his joy in the fullness of prosperity seems hardly to deserve any praise. The gap between •what is naturally felt by the person principally concerned and •what the spectator can entirely go along with is much wider with sorrow than with joy; and we're aware of that.

If a man has good health, is out of debt, and has a clear conscience, what can he *added* to his happiness? All increases of fortune for such a man can properly be said to be superfluous, and if he is much elated by them that must be an effect of the most frivolous levity. Yet •this situation may well be called the natural and ordinary state of mankind. Despite the present misery and depravity of the world, so rightly lamented, •this really is the state of the majority of men. So we get the result: most men can't find any great difficulty in raising themselves ·sympathetically· to the level of joy that someone else has through having come into this happy state.

But though little can be added to this state (·of good health, freedom from debt, and possession of a clear conscience·), much can be taken from it. There's only a trivial gap between this condition and the highest pitch of human prosperity, but between it and the lowest depth of misery the distance is immense. Thus, adversity depresses the sufferer's mind much further below its natural state than prosperity can raise it above that state. So the spectator must •find it much harder to sympathize entirely with his sorrow, keeping perfect time with it, than to enter thoroughly into his joy, and must •depart much further from his own natural and ordinary state of mind in the one case than in the other. That's why our sympathy with sorrow, despite being a more forceful sensation than our sympathy with joy, always falls further short than the latter does of the intensity of what is naturally felt by the person principally concerned. Sympathy with joy is a pleasure, and as long as envy doesn't oppose it our heart is glad to abandon itself to the highest transports of that delightful sentiment. But it is painful to go along with grief, and we always enter into that with reluctance. When we are watching a dramatic tragedy, we struggle as long as we can against the sympathetic sorrow that the entertainment inspires, and eventually give way to it only when we can no longer avoid it. And even then we try to cover our concern from those we are with; if we shed any tears we carefully conceal them, for fear that the others, not entering into this excessive tenderness themselves, might regard it as effeminacy and weakness. . . .

Why should we be more ashamed to weep than to laugh when we are in company? We may often have as much reason to weep as to laugh, but we always feel that the spectators are more likely to go along with us in the agreeable emotion than in the painful one. . . .

How hearty are the acclamations of the mob, who are never envious of their superiors, at a triumphal parade! And how sedate and moderate, usually, is their grief at an execution! Our sorrow at a funeral generally amounts to nothing but a pretended gravity, but our happiness at a christening or a marriage is always from the heart, with no pretence. On all such joyous occasions our satisfaction is often as lively as that of the persons principally concerned, though perhaps not as durable. [Smith adds details about our physical appearance during such bouts of sympathetic pleasure.]

Whereas when we condole with our friends in their afflictions, how little we feel in comparison with what *they* feel! [Smith adds details, including

the remark that our relative lack of real sympathy may produce guilt, which makes us] work ourselves up into an artificial sympathy;. . . .but as soon as we have left the room this vanishes and is gone for ever. It seems that when Nature loaded us with our own sorrows, she thought that they were enough, and therefore didn't command us to take any share other people's sorrows except for what is necessary to prompt us to help them.

[There follow two long rapturous paragraphs in praise of 'magnanimity amidst great distress', with poetic praise for the serene suicides of Cato and Socrates. Then:]

In contrast with this, anyone who is sunk in sorrow and dejection because of some calamity that has befallen him always appears somewhat mean and despicable. We can't bring ourselves to feel for him what he feels for himself, even though we might feel it for ourselves if we were in his situation. So perhaps it is unjust of us to despise him, if any sentiment can regarded as unjust when nature compels us to have it. There's never anything agreeable about the weakness of sorrow, except when it arises from what we feel for others more than from what we feel for ourselves. A son whose kindly and respectworthy father has died may give way to sorrow without much blame. His sorrow is mainly based on a sort of sympathy with his departed parent, and we readily enter into this humane emotion. But if he were to indulge the same weakness on account of a misfortune that affected only himself, we would no longer be patient with him. If he were reduced to beggary and ruin, if he were exposed to the most dreadful dangers, indeed if he were led out to a public execution and there shed one single tear on the scaffold, he would disgrace himself for ever in the minds of all the gallant and generous part of mankind. [Re 'generous', see note here.] Their compassion for him would be strong and sincere; but because it would still fall short of his excessive weakness they would not pardon his thus exposing himself in the eyes of the world. His behaviour would affect them with shame rather than with sorrow; and the dishonour that he had thus [i.e. by weeping on the scaffold] brought on himself would appear to them the most lamentable circumstance in his misfortune. . . .

Chapter 2: The origin of ambition, and differences of rank

It is because mankind are disposed to sympathize more entirely with our joy than with our sorrow that we parade our riches and conceal our poverty. Nothing is so humiliating as having to expose our distress to the public

view, and to feel that although our situation is there for everyone to see, *no-one* feels for us a half of what we feel. Indeed, this concern for the sentiments of everyone else is the main reason why we pursue riches and avoid poverty. Consider: what *is* the purpose of all the toil and bustle of this world? What is the purpose of avarice and ambition, of the pursuit of wealth, power, and pre-eminence? Is it to supply the necessities of nature? The wages of the poorest labourer can supply them: his means afford him food and clothing, and the comfort of a house and of a family. If we strictly examined his personal budget we would find that he spends a great part of his income on conveniences that can be regarded as luxuries. . . . Why, then, are we so concerned to avoid being in his situation, and why should those who have grown up in the higher ranks of life regard it as worse than death to be reduced to live—even without his labour—on the same simple food as he eats, to dwell under the same lowly roof, and to be dressed in the same humble clothes? Do they imagine that their stomach is better or their sleep sounder in a palace than in a cottage? The contrary of this has often been pointed out, and anyway it is so obvious that everyone would know it even if no-one had pointed it out! Well, then, what *is* the source of that emulation —·that *trying-to-copy*·—that runs through all the different ranks of men? What advantages do we expect from that great purpose of human life that we call ‘bettering our condition’? The only advantages we can aim to derive from it are being noticed, attended to, regarded with sympathy, acceptance, and approval. It is the vanity—not the ease or the pleasure—that draws us. But vanity is always based on our thinking we are the object of attention and approval. The rich man glories in his riches because he feels that •they naturally attract the world’s attention to him, and that •mankind are disposed to go along with him in all the agreeable emotions that the advantages of his situation so readily inspire in him. At the thought of *this* his heart seems to swell within him, and he is fonder of his wealth on *this* account than for all the other advantages it brings him. The poor man, on the other hand, is ashamed of his poverty. He feels that either •it places him out of everyone’s sight or •if people do take any notice of him it’s with almost no fellow-feeling for the misery and distress that he suffers. He is humiliated on both accounts. **Being disapproved of** is entirely different from being overlooked, ·but being overlooked is essentially tied to **not being approved of**·: the obscurity of the overlooked poor man also shuts out the daylight of honour and approval; so that his feeling of not being

taken notice of necessarily damps the most agreeable hope and disappoints the most ardent desire of human nature, ·namely, the desire for the approval of one's fellow-men·. The poor man comes and goes unheeded, and is no more noticed in the middle of a crowd than he is when shut up in his own hovel. The humble cares and earnest work that occupy people in his situation don't entertain the dissipated and the cheerful. They avert their eyes from him, or if his distress is so extreme that they have to look at him, it's only to keep themselves at a distance from such a disagreeable object. Those who are fortunate and proud are amazed that human wretchedness should dare to present itself before them, having the insolence to disturb the serenity of their happiness with the loathsome view of its misery. The man of rank and distinction, on the other hand, is observed by all the world. Everyone is eager to look at him, and to have, if only through sympathy, the joy and exultation that his circumstances naturally inspire in him. The public *care* about what he does—about his every word, every gesture. In a large assembly he is the person everyone looks at, waiting for him to start and direct their passions; and if his behaviour isn't altogether absurd, every moment gives him an opportunity to interest mankind, and to make himself an object of the observation and fellow-feeling of everyone around him. This •attention imposes restraints on him—greatness always brings a certain loss of liberty—and yet •it makes greatness an object of envy, and everyone thinks that it compensates for all the toil and anxiety involved in the pursuit of it, and (even more significant) all the leisure, ease, and carefree security that are lost for ever by the acquisition of greatness.

When we consider the condition of the great in the delusive colours in which the imagination is apt to paint it, it seems to be almost the abstract idea of a perfect and happy state. It is exactly the state that we in our daydreams had sketched out to ourselves as the ultimate object of all our desires. That gives us a special sympathy with the satisfaction of those who are in that state. We favour all their inclinations, and support all their wishes. What a pity it would be (we think) if anything were to spoil and corrupt such an agreeable situation! We could even wish them to be immortal; and it seems hard to us that death should at last put an end to such perfect enjoyment. . . . *Great King, live for ever!* is the Asian compliment that we would readily offer them if experience didn't teach us its absurdity. [In the original, as well as in this version, the preceding sentence has the first occurrence of 'king' in this work.] Every calamity that befalls them, every injury that is done them,

arouses in the breast of the spectator ten times more compassion and resentment than he would have felt if the same things had happened to other men. The only proper subjects for tragedy are the misfortunes of *kings*. In this respect they resemble the misfortunes of *lovers*. Those two situations are the ones that chiefly interest us in the theatre; because, in spite of everything that reason and experience can tell us to the contrary, the prejudices of the imagination attach to these two states a happiness superior to any other. To disturb or to put an end to such perfect enjoyment seems to be the most atrocious of all injuries. . . . All the innocent blood that was shed in the civil wars provoked less indignation than the death of Charles I. A stranger to human nature who saw •men's indifference to the misery of their inferiors and •the regret and indignation they feel for the misfortunes of those above them might well think that pain must be more agonizing, and the convulsions of death more terrible, for persons of higher rank than for those lower down in the scale.

Mankind's disposition to go along with all the passions of the rich and the powerful is the basis for the ordering of society into different *ranks*. Our fawning deference to our superiors comes from our admiration for the advantages of their situation more often than it comes from any individual's expecting benefit from their good-will. Their benefits can extend to only a few, but their fortunes are a matter of concern to almost everyone. We're eager to help them to complete a system of happiness that comes so near to perfection; and we want to serve them for their own sake, without any reward but the honour of obliging them. Nor is our deference to the wishes of people of high rank primarily based on a concern for the usefulness of •such submission, a concern for the social order that is best supported by •it. Even when the order of society seems to require that we should *oppose* the high-ranking people, we can hardly bring ourselves to do it. Consider the doctrine that

> kings are the servants of the people, who are to be obeyed, resisted, deposed, or punished as the public convenience may require;

—that is the doctrine of reason and philosophy, but it isn't the doctrine of Nature! Nature would teach us to submit to kings for their own sake, to tremble and bow down before their high station, to regard their smile as a sufficient reward for any services, and to dread their displeasure—even if no other evil were to follow from it—as the severest of all humiliations. To treat them in any way as men, to reason and argue with them on ordinary

occasions, requires a strength of character that few men have. . . . The strongest motives—the most furious •passions of fear, hatred, and resentment—are hardly enough to outweigh this natural disposition to respect them. For the bulk of the people to be willing to oppose a king with violence, or to want to see him punished or deposed, he'll have to have aroused in them—innocently or not—the highest degree of all •those passions. Even when the people have been brought this far, they are still apt to relent at any moment; they easily relapse into their habitual deference towards someone they have been accustomed to look on as their natural superior. They can't bear seeing their monarch humiliated. Resentment gives way to compassion; they forget all past provocations, their old drives towards loyalty start up again, and they run to re-establish the ruined authority of their old masters with the same violence with which they had opposed it. The death ·by beheading· of Charles I (·after the civil war of the 1640s·) brought about the restoration of the royal family. Compassion for James II when he was seized by the populace in making his escape on ship-board nearly prevented the revolution ·of 1688·, and did slow it down.

Do the great seem unaware of how easily they can get the admiration of the public? or do they seem to think that, for them as for anyone else, their rank must have been purchased either by sweat or by blood? If the young nobleman is instructed in how to support the dignity of his rank, and to make himself worthy of the superiority over his fellow-citizens that he has acquired through the virtue of his ancestors, *what* accomplishments is he told to acquire for this purpose? Is he to make himself worthy of his rank by knowledge, hard work, patience, self-denial, or any other kind of virtue? Because his least move is *noticed*, he acquires a habit of care over every detail of ordinary behaviour, and tries to perform all those small duties with the most exact propriety. Being conscious of how much he is observed, and of how much people are disposed to allow him to have whatever he wants, he acts—even in utterly ordinary situations—with the freedom and loftiness that are naturally inspired by the thought of how the populace view him. Everything about his conduct marks an elegant and graceful sense of his own superiority—something that those who are born lower down the social scale can hardly ever achieve. *These* are the arts [here = 'the devices' or even 'the tricks'] by which he proposes to make mankind more easily submit to his authority and govern *their* inclinations according to *his* wishes; and in this he usually succeeds. . . . During most of his reign Louis XIV ·of France·

was widely regarded as the most perfect model of a great prince. What were the talents and virtues by which he acquired this great reputation? The scrupulous and inflexible rightness—the danger and difficulty—the tireless energy—of everything he did? His broad knowledge, his exquisite judgment, his heroic valour? It was none of these. What he *did* have was the status of the most *powerful* prince in Europe, which gave him the highest rank among kings; and then, says his historian. . . [and Smith gives a long quotation about Louis XIV's grand and imposing personal manner, his fine voice, his handsomeness, and so on. Then:] These trivial accomplishments —supported by his rank and no doubt by a degree of other talents and virtues, though not an outstanding degree—established this prince in the esteem of his own age and later generations' respect for his memory. Compared with this kingly manner, no other virtue appeared to have any merit. . . .

But a man of lower rank can't hope to distinguish himself in any such way as that. *Polish* [Smith's word is 'politeness'] is so much a virtue of the great that it won't bring much honour to anyone else. The fool who imitates their manner, pretending to be eminent by the extreme *properness* of his ordinary behaviour, is rewarded with a double share of contempt for his •folly and •presumption. [Smith goes on a bit about the absurdity of pretentious behaviour in ordinary low-ranked people. Then:] The behaviour of a private man *ought to be* marked by perfect modesty and plainness, along with as much casualness as is consistent with the respect due to the people he is with. If he hopes ever to distinguish himself, it will have to be by more important virtues. He'll have to acquire dependents to match the dependents of the great; and because his only access to funds from which to support them will be through the labour of his body and the activity of his mind, he'll have to cultivate these. So he'll need to acquire superior knowledge in his profession, and to work unusually hard in the exercise of it. He must be patient in labour, resolute in danger, and firm in distress. He'll have bring these talents into public view by the difficulty and importance of his undertakings, by the good judgment and the severe and unrelenting application with which he pursues them. His behaviour in all ordinary circumstances must be marked by honesty and prudence, generosity and frankness; and he must give priority to activities in which it requires the greatest talents and virtues to act properly, but in which the greatest

applause goes to those who can acquit themselves with honour. ·Consider these two portraits·:

> **(1)** When the man of spirit and ambition is depressed by his situation, how impatiently he looks around for some great opportunity to distinguish himself! He won't turn down anything that can provide him with this. He even looks forward with satisfaction to the prospect of foreign war, or civil war ·in his own country·; with secret delight he sees—through all the confusion and bloodshed that wars bring—the probability of getting into some of those wished-for occasions in which he can attract the attention and admiration of mankind.
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> **(2)** The man of rank and distinction, •whose whole glory consists in the propriety of his ordinary behaviour, •who is contented with the humble renown that this can bring him, and •who has no talents to acquire any other ·distinction·, is unwilling to risk embarrassing himself in any activity that might turn out to be difficult or distressing. To cut a fine figure at a ball is his great triumph, and to succeed in a romantic intrigue is his highest exploit. He hates all public confusions, not •because he loves mankind (the great never look on their inferiors as fellow-men) and not •because he lacks courage (for he usually doesn't), but •because he is aware that he doesn't have any of the virtues that are required in such situations, and that the public attention will certainly be drawn away from him towards by others. He may be willing to expose himself to some small danger, or to conduct a military campaign when that happens to be the fashion. But he shudders with horror at the thought of any situation that would demand the continual and long exertion of patience, industry, strength, and application of thought.

Those virtues are hardly ever to be found in men who are born to high ranks. That is why in all governments—even in monarchies—the highest administrative positions are generally occupied, and the detailed administrative work done, by men who were brought up in the middle and lower social ranks, who have advanced through their own hard work and abilities, although they are loaded with the jealousy and opposed by the resentment of all those who were born their superiors. The great—·those with the very highest social rank·—at first regard these administrators as negligible, then they come to envy them, and eventually they are contented

to knuckle under to them in the same abjectly *low* manner that they want the rest of mankind to adopt towards themselves.

It's the loss of this easy command over the affections of mankind that makes the fall from greatness so unbearable. [Smith gives a rather full account of one example, the family of the defeated king of Macedon who were led in triumph through Rome. The crowd, he reports, were deeply moved by the sight of the children, but were contemptuous of the king because he had chosen to stay alive and endure this disgrace. The disgrace, Smith says sharply, was to spend the rest of his life in comfort and safety, on a generous pension. What he had lost was 'the admiring mob of fools, flatterers, and dependents who had formerly been accustomed to attend to everything he did'.]

'Love', says Rochefoucauld, 'is often followed by ambition, but ambition is hardly ever followed by love.' Once the passion of ambition has taken possession of the breast, it won't allow any rival or any successor. To those who have been accustomed to having or even *hoping for* public admiration, all other pleasures sicken and die. Some fallen statesmen have tried to become happier by working to overcome their ambition, and to despise the honours that they could no longer have; but how few have been able to succeed! Most of them have spent their time in listless and insipid laziness, •angry at the thought of their own insignificance, •unable to take an interest in the occupations of private life, •enjoying nothing but talk about their former greatness, •satisfied in no activity except pointless attempts to recover that. Are *you* sincerely determined never to barter your liberty for the lordly servitude of a court, but to live free, fearless, and independent? Here is one way to keep to that virtuous resolution, and it may be the only one: Never enter the place from which so few have been able to return, never come within the circle of ambition, and never compare yourself with those masters of the earth who have already occupied the attention of half of mankind before you.

[Smith's next paragraph starts with some rather obscure remarks about people's attitude to 'place', which he distinguishes from 'rank'. He continues:] But no-one despises rank, distinction, pre-eminence, unless he is either vastly •better than the human average or vastly •worse, i.e. unless he is either

> •so confirmed in wisdom and real philosophy that he is convinced that as long as the propriety of his conduct *entitles* him to approval it

doesn’t matter much whether people notice him or approve of him,

or else

> •so habituated to the idea of his own low condition, so sunk in slothful and sottish indifference, that he has entirely forgotten the desire. . . .for superiority.

What gives to prosperity all its dazzling splendour is the prospect of being a natural object of the joyous congratulations and sympathetic attention of mankind; and, correspondingly, what makes the gloom of adversity so horribly dark is the feeling that our misfortunes are objects (not of the fellow-feeling, but) of the contempt and aversion of our brethren. It’s because of this that the most dreadful calamities aren’t always the ones that it is hardest to bear. It is often more humiliating to appear in public under small disasters than under great misfortunes. The small ones arouse no sympathy, whereas the great calamities evoke a lively compassion. Although in the latter case the spectators’ sympathetic feelings aren’t as lively as the anguish of the sufferer, the gap between sufferer and spectator is smaller in those cases than in the case of small misfortunes, so that the spectator’s imperfect fellow-feeling does give the sufferer some help in bearing his misery. It would be more humiliating for a gentleman to appear at a social event covered with filth and rags than to appear with blood and wounds. The latter situation would draw people’s pity, whereas the other would make them laugh. The judge who orders a criminal to be set in the pillory dishonours him more than if he had condemned him to the scaffold. [Smith adds some remarks about (dis)honour, apparently connecting it with the (un)likelihood of attracting pity. Then:] That’s why persons of high rank are never subjected to lesser punishments: the law often takes their life, but it almost always respects their honour. To flog such a person or to set him in the pillory, on account of any crime whatever, is a brutality of which no European government is capable—except Russia’s.

A brave man isn’t made contemptible by being brought to the scaffold; he is, by being set in the pillory. His behaviour on the scaffold may gain him universal esteem and admiration, whereas nothing he can do in the pillory can make him agreeable. The sympathy of the spectators supports him on the scaffold, saving him from the most unbearable of all sentiments, namely the shameful sense that his misery is felt by no-one but himself. There is no sympathy for the man in the pillory; or if there *is* any it’s not sympathy with •his pain, which is a trifle, but sympathy with •his awareness

of not getting any sympathy because of his pain. Those who pity him blush and hang down their heads for him. He droops in the same way, and feels himself irrecoverably degraded by the punishment, though not by the crime. In contrast with this, the man who dies with resolution is naturally regarded with esteem and approval by spectators who have their heads up, and he keeps *his* head up too; and if the crime doesn't deprive him of the respect of others, the punishment never will. He has no suspicion that his situation is an object of contempt or derision to anyone, and he is entitled to assume the air not only of perfect calmness but of triumph and exultation. . . .

Chapter 3: The corruption of our moral sentiments that comes from this disposition to admire the rich and the great, and to despise or neglect the downtrodden and poor

This disposition to admire—and almost to *worship*—the rich and the powerful, and to despise or at least neglect persons of poor and mean condition, is (on one hand) necessary to establish and maintain the distinction of ranks and the order of society, and (on the other) the great and most universal cause of the corruption of our moral sentiments. Moralists all down the centuries have complained that wealth and greatness are often given the respect and admiration that only wisdom and virtue should receive, and that poverty and weakness are quite wrongly treated with the contempt that should be reserved for vice and folly.

We want to be respected and to be worthy of respect. We're afraid of being contemned and of being contemptible. But as we move into the world we soon find that wisdom and virtue are by no means the only objects of respect, and that vice and folly aren't the only objects of contempt. We often see the world's respectful attentions directed more strongly towards the rich and great than towards the wise and virtuous. We often see the vices and follies of the powerful much less despised than the poverty and weakness of the innocent. For us to further our great ambition to enjoy the respect and admiration of mankind, two different roads are presented to us, each leading to the desired goal: **(1)** the acquisition of wealth and greatness, and **(2)** the study of wisdom and the practice of virtue. Two different characters are presented for us to try to achieve: **(1)** proud ambition and ostentatious greed, and **(2)** humble modesty and fairness of conduct. Two different pictures are held out to us as models on which we can try to shape our own character and behaviour: **(1)** one is gaudy and glittering in its colouring, **(2)** the other is more correct and more exquisitely beautiful in its

outline; **(1)** one forces itself on the notice of every wandering eye, **(2)** the other doesn't attract much attention from anyone but the most studious and careful observer. **(1)** The admirers and worshippers of wealth and greatness are the great mob of mankind (and how odd it seems that most of them aren't in this camp because they hope to get anything out of it). **(2)** The real and steady admirers of wisdom and virtue are mostly wise and virtuous themselves; they're a select group, but not a large one, I'm afraid. The two •objects of respect produce two •kinds of respect; it's not hard to tell them apart, and yet they have a great deal in common, so that inattentive observers are apt to mistake the one for the other, i.e. to observe a case of respect for wealth and greatness and to mistake it for a case of respect for wisdom and virtue.

Almost everyone respects the rich and great more than the poor and the humble. [Smith starts that sentence with 'In equal degrees of merit. . . ', which suggests that his point might be: If a rich man is morally on a par with a poor one, nearly everyone will give the rich one more respect. But the rest of the paragraph doesn't suggest any concern with moral equality across differences of rank.] With most men the presumption and vanity of the rich are much more admired than the real and solid merit of the poor. It is hardly agreeable to good morals, indeed it seems like an abuse of language, to say

> 'Mere wealth and greatness, abstracted from merit and virtue, deserve our respect.'

But we have to admit that wealth and greatness so constantly *get* respect that they can be considered as in some ways the *natural* objects of it. The status of someone who is wealthy and great can be completely degraded by vice and folly, but it takes an enormous intensity of vice and folly to do this. The extravagance of a man of fashion is looked on with much less contempt and aversion than that of a man lower down the social scale. One breach of the rules of temperance and propriety by a poor man is commonly more resented than the constant and open disregard of those rules ever is in a rich man.

In the middling and lower stations of life, the road to virtue is happily pretty much the same as the road to fortune, in most cases; I'm talking here about the kind of fortune that men in such ·lower· stations can reasonably expect to acquire. In all the middling and lower professions, it's nearly always possible to succeed through real and solid professional abilities combined with prudent, just, firm, and temperate conduct. And sometimes abilities will bring success even when the conduct is far from correct. But

habitual imprudence will always cloud and sometimes submerge the most splendid professional abilities, and so can injustice, weakness, and extravagance. ·That's one consideration that tends to keep· men who are in the lower or middling stations of life ·behaving properly. And there are two others: •Such men· can never be great enough to be above the law, and that inevitably overawes them into some sort of respect for the rules of justice, or at least the more important of them. •And the success of such people nearly always depends on the favour and good opinion of their neighbours and equals, and that can seldom be had unless their conduct is tolerably regular [i.e. pretty much in accordance with the rules]. So the good old proverb that *honesty is the best policy* holds true here; and we can generally expect a considerable degree of virtue in such situations, which are (fortunately for the good morals of society!) the situations that the vast majority of mankind are in.

In the upper stations of life the case is not, unfortunately, always like that. In the courts of princes and in the drawing-rooms of the great, success and advancement depend not on the esteem of intelligent and well-informed equals but on the fanciful and foolish favour of ignorant, presumptuous, and proud superiors; and flattery and falsehood too often prevail over merit and abilities. In such societies the ability to please is valued above the ability to serve. In times of peace a prince or great man wishes only to be amused, and is even apt to imagine •that he has almost no need for service from anyone, or •that those who amuse him are sufficiently able to serve him. The trivial accomplishments of. . . .a man of fashion are commonly more admired than the solid and masculine virtues of a warrior, a statesman, a philosopher, or a legislator. All the great and awe-inspiring virtues—the ones that can equip a man for the council, the senate, or the battlefield—are regarded with the utmost contempt and derision by the insolent and insignificant flatterers who commonly loom largest in such corrupted societies. When the duke of Sully was called on by Louis XIII to give his advice in a great emergency, he noticed the courtiers giggling to one another about his unfashionable appearance. 'Whenever your majesty's father', said the old warrior and statesman, 'did me the honour to consult me, he ordered the buffoons of the court to leave the room.'

It's because of our disposition to admire and therefore to imitate the rich and the great that they are able to set *fashions*—in dress, language, deportment. Even their vices and follies are fashionable, and most men are

proud to imitate and resemble them in the very qualities that dishonour and degrade them. [Some people, Smith says, act as though they had •the vices and follies of the rich and great, wanting to be admired for this, even when they don't approve of •them and perhaps don't even have •them. 'There are hypocrites of wealth and greatness, as well as of religion and virtue.' He is sharply critical of the not-very-rich man who tries to pass himself off as rich without thinking about the fact that if he really adopts the way of life of a rich man he will soon reduce himself 'to beggary'. Then:]

To attain to this envied situation the candidates for fortune too often abandon the path of virtue, which unfortunately sometimes goes in the exact opposite direction from the path to wealth, status, fame. The ambitious man comforts himself with the thought that in the splendid situation that he is aiming at he'll have so many ways to draw the respect and admiration of mankind, and will be able to act with such superior propriety and grace that the glow of his future conduct will entirely cover or erase the foulness of the steps by which he got there. In many governments the candidates for the highest stations are above the law [that clause is verbatim Smith]; and if they can attain the object of their ambition they have no fear of being indicted for anything they did to get there. So they often try to supplant and destroy those who oppose or stand in the way of their greatness—not only by fraud and falsehood (the ordinary and vulgar arts of intrigue and plotting), but also sometimes by committing the most enormous crimes, by murder and assassination, by rebellion and civil war. They fail more often than they succeed, and usually gain nothing but the disgraceful punishment that their crimes deserve. And even when they *do* attain that wished-for greatness, they find nothing like the happiness that they had expected to enjoy in it. What the ambitious man is really after is not ease or pleasure but always some kind of honour (though often an honour that he doesn't understand well); and the honour of his exalted station seems to him and to other people to be polluted and defiled by the baseness of his way of achieving it. [Smith continues with a colourful account of the ambitious man who reaches the top by disgusting means, tries every trick to get •others and •himself to forget how he got there, and fails in •both attempts. 'He is still secretly pursued by the avenging furies of shame and remorse.']

Part II: Merit and demerit: the objects of reward and punishment

Section 1: The sense of merit and demerit

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- Chapter 2: The proper objects of gratitude and resentment
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Section 3: The influence of luck on mankind's sentiments regarding the merit or demerit of actions

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Section 1: The sense of merit and demerit

Introduction

The actions and conduct of mankind can be brought within range of approval/disapproval in two different ways: one is through their being proper or improper, decent or graceless, ·*right* or *wrong*·; the other is through their having merit or demerit, the qualities of deserving reward and of deserving punishment.

I have already remarked that the sentiment or affection of the heart [Smith's phrase; see note here about 'affection'] from which an action comes, and on which its whole virtue or vice depends, can be considered under two different aspects or in two different relations:

> **(1)** It can be considered in relation to the cause or object that arouses it. The affection's (un)suitableness or (dis)proportion to the cause or object that arouses it is what determines the (im)propriety, ·the rightness or wrongness·, of the consequent action.
>
> **(2)** It can be considered in relation to the end at which it aims or the effect that it is likely to produce. The affection's tendency to produce beneficial or harmful effects is what determines the merit or demerit, the good or ill desert, of the action to which it gives rise.

In Part I of this work I have explained what our sense of **(1)** the propriety or impropriety of actions consists in. I now start to consider what **(2)** the good or ill desert of actions consists in.

Chapter 1: Whatever appears to be the proper object of gratitude (resentment) appears to deserve reward (punishment)

[Smith's first paragraph repeats, at greater length but with no more content, the proposition that is the chapter-title. Then:]

The sentiment that most immediately and directly prompts us to reward ·someone· is gratitude, and what most immediately and directly prompts us to punish ·someone· is resentment. So it's bound to be the case that any action that appears to be a proper and approved object of gratitude will seem to us to *deserve* reward, and any action that appears to be a proper and approved object of resentment will seem to us to *deserve* punishment.

Rewarding is recompensing or repaying, returning good for good received. Punishing is also recompensing or repaying, though in a different

manner; it is returning evil for evil that has been done.

Gratitude and resentment are not the only passions that interest us in the happiness or misery of other people; but they are the ones that most directly arouse us to cause such happiness or misery. If habitual approval of someone gives us love and esteem for him, we are of course pleased that he should have good fortune, and so we're willing to lend a hand to promote that. But our •love for him is fully satisfied if his good fortune comes about without help from us. All this passion wants is to *see him happy*, without regard for who is the author of his prosperity. But •gratitude can't be satisfied in this way. If someone to whom we owe many obligations is made happy without our assistance, though this pleases our love it doesn't satisfy our gratitude. Until *we* have repaid him, till we ourselves have been contributed to promoting his happiness, we feel ourselves still loaded with the debt that his past services have laid upon us.

Similarly, if habitual disapproval of someone makes us hate and dislike him, that will often lead us to take a malicious pleasure in his misfortune. But although •dislike and hatred harden us against all sympathy, and sometimes even dispose us to rejoice at the person's distress, if no resentment is involved—if neither we nor our friends have received any great personal provocation—•these passions wouldn't naturally lead us to want to be instrumental in causing such distress. Even if there was no risk of punishment for having a hand in it, we would rather that his distress should happen by some other means. To someone dominated by violent hatred, it might be agreeable to hear that the person he loathes and detests has been killed in an accident. But if he has the least spark of justice (which he *might* have, though violent hatred isn't favourable to virtue), he would be tremendously upset to have been the •unintentional cause of the accident; and immeasurably more shocked by the thought of having •voluntarily contributed to it. . . . But it's not like that with resentment. If someone who has done us some great injury—murdered our father or our brother, for example—dies of a fever soon afterwards, or is executed for some other crime, this might soothe our hatred but it wouldn't fully gratify our resentment. What our resentment makes us want is not merely for

•him to be punished,

but also for

•him to be punished by us,

and for

•him to be punished for the particular injury that he did to us.

Resentment can't be fully satisfied unless the offender is not only made to grieve in his turn, but to grieve for the particular wrong we have suffered from him. He must be made to repent and be sorry for *that particular action*. And the natural gratification of this passion tends automatically to produce all the political ends of punishment—the correction of the criminal, and the example to the public (who, through fear of such punishment, will be scared off from being guilty of a similar offence). So gratitude and resentment are the sentiments that most immediately and directly prompt us to reward and to punish; that is why anyone who seems to us to be the proper and approved object of gratitude also seems to us to *deserve* reward, and anyone who seems to us to be the proper and approved object of resentment also seems to us to *deserve* punishment..

Chapter 2: The proper objects of gratitude and resentment

All it can mean to say that someone is 'the proper and approved object of gratitude (or resentment)' is that he is an object of gratitude (or resentment) that naturally seems proper and is approved of. And what does it mean to say that a given instance of gratitude or resentment 'seems proper and is approved of'? The same as it means to say this about any other human passion, namely that the heart of every impartial spectator entirely sympathizes with the passion in question, i.e. that every unbiased bystander entirely enters into the passion and goes along with it.

Therefore, a person appears to deserve reward if he is the natural object of someone's gratitude, this being an instance of gratitude that every human heart is disposed to beat time to [Smith's phrase], and thereby applaud. And a person appears to deserve punishment if he is the natural object of someone's resentment, this being an instance of resentment that the breast of every reasonable man is ready to adopt and sympathize with. It is surely right to say that an action appears to *deserve* reward if everyone who knows of it will *want* it to be rewarded, and appears to *deserve* punishment if everyone who hears of it is angry about it and for that reason is happy to see it punished. ·I shall now put flesh on these two lots of bones·.

[The words 'benefactor' and 'beneficiary' will be used quite a lot in this version, though Smith doesn't use 'benefactor' so much and never uses 'beneficiary'. The aim is brevity—sparing us Smith's 'the person who receives the benefit' and 'the person who bestows the benefit'.]

(1) Just as we sympathize with the joy of our companions when they prosper, so also we join with them in their contented and satisfied attitude to

whatever is the cause of their good fortune. We •enter into the love and affection that they have for that cause, and •begin to love it too. We would be sorry for their sakes if it were destroyed, or even if it were placed too far away from them, out of the reach of their care and protection, even if that distance wouldn't deprive them of anything except the pleasure of seeing it. And this holds in a quite special way if the cause of our brethren's happiness is another *person*. When we see one man being assisted, protected, and relieved by another, our sympathy with the joy of the beneficiary serves to enliven our fellow-feeling with his gratitude towards his benefactor. We look on the benefactor in the way we imagine the beneficiary must look on him; the benefactor seems to stand before us in the most attractive and amiable light. So we find it easy to sympathize with the beneficiary's grateful affection for the person to whom he has been so much obliged; and that leads us to applaud the good things that he is disposed to do in return for the good that has been done for him. As we entirely enter into the affection that produces these return-benefits, they necessarily seem to be in every way proper and suitable to their object.

(2) In the same way that we sympathize with the sorrow of our fellow-creature when we see his distress, we enter into his abhorrence and aversion towards whatever has caused it. As our heart adopts •his grief and beats time to it, so it is filled with the spirit by which he tries to drive away or destroy the cause of •it. The slack and passive fellow-feeling with which we accompany him in •his sufferings gives way to the more vigorous and active sentiment with which we go along with him in his effort either to repel •them or to gratify his aversion to whatever it was that caused •them. This is especially the case when the cause of his sufferings is a human person. When we see one man oppressed or injured by another, our sympathy with the distress of the sufferer animates our fellow-feeling with his resentment against the offender. We rejoice to see him hit back at his adversary, and are eager and ready to help him whenever he exerts himself •in self-defence or even (within limits) •in getting revenge. If the sufferer dies in the quarrel, we sympathize not only with the real resentment of his friends and relatives but also with the resentment that we imagine to be felt by the dead man, who in fact can no longer feel that or any other human sentiment. . . . The sympathetic tears that we shed for the immense and irretrievable loss that we imagine him to have sustained seems like only a small part of the duty we owe him. The injury he has suffered demands, we think, a principal part

of our attention. We feel the resentment that we imagine he. . . .would feel if his cold and lifeless body retained any awareness of what happens on earth. His blood, we think, calls aloud for vengeance. . . . The horrors that are supposed to haunt the bed of the murderer, the ghosts that (superstition imagines) rise from their graves to demand vengeance on those who cut their lives short, all arise from this natural sympathy with the imaginary resentment of the murdered person. At least with this most dreadful of all crimes, nature has in this way stamped on the human heart, in the strongest and most indelible characters, an immediate and instinctive approval of the sacred and necessary law of retaliation, this being something that comes into play before any thoughts about the utility of punishment.

Chapter 3: Where there's no approval of the benefactor's conduct, there's not much sympathy with the beneficiary's gratitude; and where there's no disapproval of the motives of the person who does someone harm, there's absolutely no sympathy with the victim's resentment

[The first paragraph of this chapter repeats, without significant additions, what is said in the chapter's heading. Then:]

(1) When we can't sympathize with the affections of the benefactor, when there seems to be no propriety in his reasons for acting as he did, we're less disposed to enter into the gratitude of the beneficiary. A *very* small return seems enough to reward the foolish and profuse generosity that confers great benefits for trivial reasons—e.g. giving a man an estate merely because he has the same personal name and family name as the giver. . . . In a case like that, our contempt for the folly of the benefactor hinders us from thoroughly entering into the gratitude of the beneficiary; the benefactor seems unworthy of it. . . . Monarchs who have heaped wealth, power, and honours onto their favourites haven't often aroused the degree of attachment to their persons that has often been experienced by those who were less lavish in handing out favours. The good-natured but unwise lavishness of James I of Great Britain doesn't seem to have brought him anyone's personal loyalty; despite his social and harmless disposition, he appears to have lived and died without a friend. Whereas the whole gentry and nobility of England risked their lives and fortunes in the cause of his more frugal and discriminating son, ·Charles I·, despite the coldness and distant severity of his ordinary behaviour.

(2) When one person suffers at the hands of another, and the agent's conduct appears to have been entirely directed by motives and affections that we thoroughly enter into and approve of, we can't have any sort of

sympathy with the sufferer's resentment, no matter how great the harm that has been done to him. When two people quarrel, if we sympathize with and entirely adopt the resentment of one of them, we can't possibly enter into the other's. Our sympathy with the person whose motives we go along with, and whom we therefore look on as in the right, is bound to harden us against all fellow-feeling with the other ·party to the quarrel·, whom we necessarily regard as being in the wrong. Whatever *he* has suffered, while it is no more than what we ourselves would have wanted him to suffer, no more than what our own sympathetic indignation would have prompted us to inflict on him, it can't either displease or provoke us. When an inhuman murderer is brought to the scaffold, though we have some compassion for his misery we can't have any sort of fellow-feeling with any resentment that he is absurd enough to express any against his prosecutor or his judge. The natural outcome of *their* just indignation is indeed most fatal and ruinous to him; but we can't be displeased with the consequences of a sentiment that we feel that *we* cannot avoid adopting when we bring the case home to ourselves.

Chapter 4: Recapitulation of the preceding chapters

[This short chapter is what its title says it is, and no more.]

Chapter 5: Analysing the sense of merit and demerit

(1) So it comes down to this: When one person x acts upon another person y (if I may put it like that; ·I mean when x acts in some way that has consequences affecting y·), our sense of the **propriety** of x's conduct arises from what I'll call a •direct sympathy with x's affections and motives; and our sense of the **merit** of x's conduct arises from what I'll call an •indirect sympathy with y's gratitude. [Strictly speaking, there is nothing indirect about the latter sympathy; what is indirect is that sympathy's relationship to x.]

On this account,. . . .the sense of merit seems to be a compound sentiment, made up of two distinct emotions—a direct sympathy with the sentiments of the benefactor and an indirect sympathy with the gratitude of his beneficiaries.

[Smith now offers a fairly long paragraph applying this account to our emotions as we read works of history. This doesn't add anything to the account, except for the remark that 'we are shocked beyond all measure if

beneficiaries seem by their conduct to have little sense of the obligations conferred on them'.]

(2) In the same way that our sense of the **impropriety** of the conduct of a person x arises from our lack of sympathy for (or even an outright antipathy to) x's affections and motives, so also our sense of its **demerit** arises from what I'll again call an indirect sympathy with the person y who has suffered from x's conduct.

So it seems that the sense of demerit is like the sense of merit in being a compounded sentiment, made up of two distinct emotions; a direct antipathy to x's sentiments and an indirect sympathy with y's resentment.

[Again Smith applies this to the varying emotional states of a reader of history. This colourful account reaches a climax here:] Our sense of the horror and dreadful atrocity of such conduct, the delight we get from hearing that it was properly punished, the indignation we feel when it escapes this due retaliation, in short our whole sense and feeling of what that conduct deserves—of the propriety and fitness of inflicting evil on the person who is guilty of it and making him grieve in his turn—arises from the sympathetic indignation that naturally boils up in the breast of the spectator whenever he thoroughly brings home to himself the situation of the sufferer.

[The rest of this chapter was originally a long footnote.]

I have attributed our natural •sense of the ill desert of human actions to our sympathy with the resentment of the sufferer; and many people—perhaps most—will see this as a degradation of •that sentiment. Resentment is commonly regarded as so odious they they'll tend to think it impossible that something as praiseworthy as the sense of the ill desert of vice should be in any way based on it. They may be more willing to admit that our sense of the merit of good actions is based on our sympathy with the gratitude of the beneficiaries, because gratitude—along with all the other benevolent passions—is regarded as a likeable motive that can't detract from the value of whatever is based on it. ·But that immediately puts them in a difficulty, because· gratitude and resentment are obviously in every respect counterparts to one another; if our sense of merit arises from a sympathy with the one, our sense of demerit can hardly *not* come from a fellow-feeling with the other.

And here is another point. Resentment at the level at which we too often see it *is* indeed just about the most odious of all the passions, but it isn't

disapproved of when it doesn't fly so high and is brought right down to the level of the spectator's sympathetic indignation. When we bystanders feel that the sufferer's resentment doesn't in any way go beyond our own, when no word or gesture escapes him that indicates an emotion more violent than what we can keep time to, and when he never aims at inflicting any punishment beyond what we would rejoice to see inflicted. . . ., it is impossible that we won't entirely approve of his sentiments. Our own emotion in this case is bound to strike us as clearly justifying his. And as we learn from experience *how* incapable most people are of this moderation, and how great an effort it would take them to bring the rough undisciplined impulse of resentment down to this suitable level, we can't help having a considerable degree of esteem and admiration for anyone who manages to do so. When the sufferer's animosity exceeds (as it nearly always does) anything that *we* can go along with, we can't enter into it and so, inevitably, we disapprove of it. [Smith says that our disapproval of excessive resentment is greater than our disapproval of any other excess of passion, amounts of excess being equal. Then:] That is why revenge, the excess of resentment, appears to be the most detestable of all the passions and is an object of everyone's horror and indignation. And because excessive instances of this passion outnumber moderate ones a hundred to one, we're much inclined to regard it as odious and detestable right across the board. (Depraved as we are, Nature hasn't built into us any drive or motive that is wholly evil in every way, i.e. that can't be properly praised and approved of whatever its intensity level and direction of aim.) On some occasions we have a sense that this usually-too-strong passion is too weak. [Smith elaborates that along the lines of the passage here above.]

The writers ·in the Old Testament· wouldn't have talked so often or so strongly of God's wrath and anger if they had regarded every degree of those passions as vicious and evil, even in so weak and imperfect a creature as man.

Please bear in mind that this inquiry is about a matter not of •right but of •fact. We're concerned here with principles ·or criteria· to guide approval of the punishment of bad actions; the topic isn't the principles on the basis of which **a perfect being would** arrive at such approvals but rather the ones by which **weak and imperfect men actually do** arrive at them. It's obvious that the principles I have mentioned have a great effect on a man's sentiments; and it seems wisely ordered that they should do so. The very

existence of society requires that undeserved and unprovoked malice should be restrained by proper punishments, and thus that inflicting those punishments should be regarded as a proper and laudable action. And men are naturally endowed with a desire for •the welfare and preservation of society; but the Author of nature hasn't left it to men to use their reason to work out what kinds and levels of punishment are right for •this purpose; rather, he has endowed men with an immediate and instinctive approval of just precisely the kind and level of punishment that is most proper to attain •it. The arrangement that nature has made here is like what it has done in many other contexts. With regard to all the specially important purposes—the ones that we might call nature's favourites—she has endowed mankind not only with an appetite for the end that she proposes, but also with an appetite for the only means by which this end can be brought about. (I mean: an appetite for them for their own sakes, independently of any thought about what they might lead to.) Thus self-preservation and the propagation of the species seem to be the great ends that Nature has proposed in the formation of all animals; and men are endowed with a desire for those ends, and an aversion to the contrary. . . . But it hasn't been left to the slow and uncertain conclusions of our reason to discover how to bring those ends about. Nature has directed us to most of them by basic immediate instincts:

hunger,
thirst,
sexual passion,
the love of pleasure,
the fear of pain.

We seek all these for their own sakes, and not because they are conducive to survival and the propagation of our species; but they *are* conducive to them, and they are what the great Director of nature intended as a means to them.

[The enormous footnote concludes with an extremely difficult, confusing, and probably confused paragraph about a certain 'difference between the approval of propriety and the approval of merit'.]

Section 2: Justice and beneficence

Chapter 1: Comparing those two virtues

The only actions that seem to require reward are ones that •tend to do good and •come from proper motives, because they're the only ones that are approved objects of gratitude, i.e. that arouse the sympathetic gratitude of the spectator.

The only actions that seem to seem to deserve punishment are ones that •tend to do harm and •come from improper motives, because they're the only ones that are approved objects of resentment, i.e. arouse the sympathetic resentment of the spectator.

Beneficence is always free, it can't be extorted by force, and merely not giving doesn't expose one to punishment, because the mere lack of beneficence doesn't tend to produce real positive evil. It may disappoint someone who had reasonably expected some benefit, and on that account it may justly arouse dislike and disapproval; but it can't provoke any resentment that mankind will go along with. The man who doesn't recompense his benefactor when he has it in his power to do so, and when his benefactor needs his help, is no doubt guilty of black ingratitude. No impartial spectator will have any fellow-feeling with the selfishness of his motives, and he is the proper object of the highest disapproval. But still he does no positive harm to anyone. [Smith presumably means 'he doesn't positively do harm'.] He merely doesn't do the good that in propriety he ought to have done. He is an object of •hatred, a passion naturally aroused by impropriety of sentiment and behaviour. but not of •resentment, a passion that is properly aroused only by actions that tend to do real positive harm to some particular persons. So this person's lack of gratitude can't be punished. To oblige him by force to do what gratitude should lead him to do, and what every impartial spectator would approve of him for doing, would be even more improper than his neglecting to do it. His benefactor would dishonour himself if he tried by violence to force him into gratitude, and it would be mere meddling for any third person to intervene unless he was the superior of one of the other two ['superior' here means 'employer or commanding officer or. . . ']. But of all the duties of beneficence, those that are recommended by gratitude come closest to what is called a perfect and complete obligation—·i.e. come closest to the status of 'You deserve to be punished if you don't'·.

What we are prompted to do by friendship, by generosity, by charity, meeting with universal approval when we do so, is even more free than the duties of gratitude, even further from being extortable by force. We have the phrase ‘a debt of gratitude’; we do not speak of ‘a debt of charity’ or ‘. . . of generosity’ or even ‘. . . of friendship’ except when the friendship relation has bases for gratitude mixed in with it.

It seems that nature gave us resentment for our own defence and *only* for that. It is the safeguard of justice and the security of innocence. It prompts us to beat off harm that others are trying to do to us, and to retaliate for harm already done, so that •the offender may be caused to be sorry for what he did, and so that •others, through fear of similar punishment, may be frightened off from similar offences. So resentment must be reserved for these purposes; the spectator will never go along with it when it is exerted for any other purpose. And the mere lack of the beneficent virtues doesn’t (and doesn’t try to) do any harm from which we can have occasion to defend ourselves.

But there’s another virtue the observance of •which is not left to the freedom of our own wills, •which may be extorted by force, and •the violation of which exposes the agent to resentment and thus to punishment. This virtue is *justice*; the violation of justice is injury; it does real positive harm to some particular persons, from motives that are naturally disapproved of. So it is a proper object of resentment, and of the natural consequence of resentment, namely punishment. Mankind go along with and approve of the violence employed to avenge the harm that is done by injustice, and to an even greater extent they go along with and approve of the violence that is used •to prevent and beat off the injury and •to restrain the offender from harming his neighbours. Someone who is thinking of committing an injustice is aware of this, and feels that force may properly be used, both by his intended victim and by others, either to stop him from committing his crime or to punish him when he has committed it. This is the basis for the remarkable distinction between •justice and •all the other social virtues that was recently emphasized by an author of great and original genius, namely:

> We feel ourselves to be under a stricter obligation to act according to •justice than to act in ways that fit with •friendship, •charity, or •generosity. Whether we perform these last three virtues seems to be left somewhat to our own choice; but we feel somehow that we are in a

special way tied, bound, and obliged to conform to justice ·in our conduct·. We feel that force may, with the utmost propriety and with the approval of all mankind, be used to make us conform to justice, but not to follow the precepts of the other social virtues.

But we must always carefully distinguish •what is only blamable or a proper object of disapproval from •what may be either punished or prevented by force. Something seems blamable if it **falls short of** the ordinary degree of proper beneficence that experience teaches us to expect of everybody; and something seems praiseworthy if it **goes beyond** that degree of beneficence. Conduct that **is at** the ordinary degree of beneficence seems neither blameworthy nor praiseworthy. Someone who behaves towards his son, his father, his brother, in a manner that is neither better nor worse than the conduct of most men, seems properly to deserve neither praise nor blame. . . .

But even the most ordinary degree of kindness or beneficence can't, among equals, be extorted by force. Among equals each individual is—•naturally, and •independently of the institution of civil government—regarded as having a right to defend himself from injuries *and* to exact a certain degree of punishment for injuries that have been done to him. Every generous spectator not only •approves of his conduct when he does this, but •enters so far into his sentiments that he is often willing to help him in this. . . . But when

- •a father falls short of the ordinary degree of parental affection towards a son, or
- •a son's attitude to his father seems to lack the filial reverence that might be expected, or
- •brothers are without the usual degree of brotherly affection, or
- •a man shuts out compassion and refuses to relieve the misery of his fellow-creatures though he could easily do so

—in all these cases, though everyone blames the conduct, no-one imagines that those who might have reason to expect more kindness have any right to extort it by force. The sufferer can only complain, and the spectator can't interfere except advising and persuading. In all such cases it would be thought the highest degree of insolence and presumption for equals to use force against one another.

A superior may sometimes require people under his jurisdiction to behave, in this respect, with a certain degree of propriety towards one

another; and no-one will find fault with his doing this. The laws of all civilized nations •oblige parents to support their children, and ·adult· children to support their ·aged· parents, and •impose on men many other duties of beneficence. [The phrase 'the civil magistrate', which we are about to meet, referred to any official whose job is to *apply* and *enforce* the laws; but Smith and some other writers extended it to cover also anyone who *makes* the civil laws.] The civil magistrate is entrusted with the power not only of •preserving the public peace by restraining injustice, but also of •promoting the prosperity of the commonwealth by establishing good discipline and discouraging every sort of vice and impropriety. So it is all right for him to prescribe rules that don't just prohibit citizens from harming one another but also command that they help one another to a certain degree. If the sovereign commands the citizens to do A, from then on not-doing-A is disobedience and is not only blameworthy but punishable. That holds even if before the sovereign's command there had been no blame attached to not-doing-A, and it holds more strongly still if not-doing-A had been highly blameworthy even before the sovereign commanded the doing of A. Of all the duties of a law-giver, however, this may be the one that needs the greatest delicacy and caution to perform with propriety and judgment. To neglect it altogether exposes the commonwealth to many gross disorders and shocking crimes, and to push it too far is destructive of all liberty, security, and justice.

Though the lack of beneficence doesn't seem to deserve punishment among equals, the greater efforts of that virtue do appear to deserve the highest reward. By producing the greatest good they become natural and approved objects of the liveliest gratitude. On the other hand, a man's •breach of justice exposes him to punishment, whereas his •observing the rules of that virtue hardly seem to deserve any reward. There is certainly a propriety in behaving justly, so that such conduct deserves all the approval that is due to propriety. But because it does no real positive good it isn't entitled to much gratitude. If the best we can say of someone is that he *doesn't* violate the persons or estates or reputations of his neighbours, he surely doesn't have much positive merit. But he does fulfill all the rules of justice, strictly so-called, and does everything that his equals can properly •force him to do or •punish him for not doing. We can often fulfill all the rules of justice by sitting still and doing nothing!

As you treat others, so they will treat you; and *retaliation* seems to be the great law that Nature dictates to us. We think of beneficence and generosity

as being owed to those who are themselves generous and beneficent. As for those who never open up their hearts to the feelings of humanity, we think that *they* should be correspondingly •shut out from the affections of all their fellow-creatures and •allowed to live in the midst of society as though in a great desert where there's nobody to care for them. . . . Someone who violates the laws of justice ought to be made to feel for himself the evil that he has done to someone else; and because he can't be •restrained by his brethren's sufferings, he ought to be •over-awed by the fear of his own! The man who is merely innocent—observing the laws of justice with regard to others, abstaining from harming his neighbours, but doing no more than that—can deserve only that his neighbours should respect his innocence in return, and that the same laws should be scrupulously observed with regard to him.

Chapter 2: The sense of justice, of remorse, and of the consciousness of merit

The only proper motive for harming our neighbour—the only incitement to do evil to someone else that mankind will go along with—is just indignation for evil that the other person has done to us. To disturb his happiness merely because it stands in the way of our own, to take from him what is of real use to him merely because it may be of equal or of more use to us, or in this way to act on the natural preference that every man has for his own happiness above that of other people, is something that no impartial spectator can go along with. There's no doubt that nature gives to each man the primary responsibility for his own care; and it's fit and right that this should be so, because each man is better able to take care of himself than anyone else is. It follows from this that each man is much more deeply concerned •with whatever is immediately connected with himself than •with what has to do with anyone else. Hearing about the death of someone with whom we have no particular connection will probably give us less concern—will do less in the way of putting us off our food or disturbing our sleep—than would a very insignificant disaster that has befallen ourselves. But although the ruin of our neighbour may affect us much less than a small misfortune of our own, we mustn't ruin him in order to prevent that small misfortune—or even to prevent our own ruin. In all cases like this we must see ourselves not in the light in which we naturally appear to •ourselves but rather in the light in which we naturally appear to •others. . . . Though each man's happiness may matter to him more than the happiness of the rest of

the world, to every other person it doesn't matter any more than anyone else's. So although it may be true that every individual, in his own breast, naturally prefers himself to all mankind, he won't dare to look mankind in the face and declare that he acts according to this principle. He feels that they can never go along with him in this preference, and that however natural it may be to him it must always appear excessive and extravagant to them. When he views himself in the light in which he's aware that others will view him, he sees that to them he's merely one of the multitude and in no way better than any of the others. If he wants to act in such a way that an impartial spectator can may enter into the motives of his conduct—that being what he wants most of all—he must now and always humble the arrogance of his self-love, bringing it down to something that other men can go along with. They will accept his self-love far enough to allow him to care about his own happiness more than anyone else's—to care about it more and to work more intently on its behalf. When they place themselves in his situation, they'll readily go along with him to that extent. In the race for wealth, honours, and promotions he may run as hard as he can, straining every nerve and muscle in order to outstrip all his competitors. But if he should jostle or trip any of them, the allowance of the spectators is entirely at an end—that is a violation of fair play that they can't allow. . . . They now sympathize with the natural resentment of the person who was shouldered aside or tripped, and the offender becomes an object of their hatred and indignation. He is aware of this, and feels that those sentiments are ready to burst out from all sides against him.

The greater and more irreparable the evil that is done, the greater is

- the resentment of the sufferer,
- the sympathetic indignation of the spectator, and
- the sense of guilt in the agent.

Death is the greatest evil that one man can inflict on another, and it arouses the highest degree of resentment in those who are immediately connected with the person who has been killed. Thus, of all the crimes that affect only individuals *murder* is the most atrocious—in the sight of mankind, and in the sight of the murderer. Being •deprived of something that we now possess is a greater evil than being •disappointed in some expectation of receiving a certain good. That is why theft and robbery (which take our possessions) are greater crimes than breach of contract (which merely disappoints our expectations). So the most sacred laws of justice—the ones

the violation of which seems to call loudest for vengeance and punishment —are the laws that guard our neighbour's •life and person; next in line come those that guard his •property and possessions; and lastly those that guard what are called his •personal rights, or what is due to him from the promises of others.

If someone who violates the more sacred laws of justice ever thinks about the sentiments that mankind must have regarding him, he has to feel all the agonies of shame, horror, and consternation. When his passion—·i.e. the passion that caused him to act so badly in the first place·—is gratified, and he starts to think coolly about his past conduct, he can't enter into ·or sympathize with· any of the motives that influenced it. They now appear as detestable to him as they always did to other people. By sympathizing with the hatred and abhorrence that other men must have towards him, he now to some extent hates and abhors himself. The situation of the person who has suffered from his injustice now draws pity from him. He is grieved at the thought of it, and regrets •the unhappy effects of his conduct, feeling that •they have made him the proper object of mankind's resentment and indignation of mankind, and of the vengeance and punishment that naturally flow from such resentment. . . . His fellowcreatures' memory of his crimes shuts out from their hearts all fellow-feeling with him; the sentiments that they *do* have regarding him are just what he is most afraid of. Everything seems hostile; he would like to escape to some inhospitable desert where he would never have to confront any human creature, never have to read in mankind's countenance the condemnation of his crimes. But solitude is even more dreadful than society. His own thoughts can present him with nothing but what is black, unfortunate, and disastrous, the miserable expectation of incomprehensible misery and ruin. The horror of solitude drives him back into society, and he returns—bewildered, ashamed, and terrified—into the presence of mankind, in order to beg for some little protection from the those very judges who he knows have already unanimously condemned him! Such is the nature of the sentiment of *remorse*, properly so-called; it is the most dreadful sentiment that human beings are capable of. It is compounded out of •shame from the sense of the impropriety of past conduct; •grief for the effects of it; •pity for those who have suffered through it; and, because of the justly provoked resentment of all rational creatures, •the dread and terror of punishment.

The opposite behaviour naturally inspires the opposite sentiment. Take the case of a man who has performed a generous action, not as a frivolous whim but from proper motives. When *he* looks forward to those whom he has served, he feels himself to be the natural object of their love and gratitude and, by sympathy with them, of the esteem and approval of all mankind. And when he looks back to •the motive from which he acted, viewing it in the light in which the unbiased spectator will survey it, he still enters into •it and, by sympathy with the approval of this supposed impartial judge, he applauds himself. In both these points of view, ·forward and backward·, his own conduct appears to him every way agreeable. The thought of it fills his mind with cheerfulness, serenity, and composure. He is in friendship and harmony with all mankind, and looks on his fellow-creatures with confidence and benevolent satisfaction, knowing that he has made himself worthy of their most favourable regards. The combination of all these sentiments constitute the consciousness of merit, i.e. the consciousness of deserving to be rewarded.

Chapter 3: The utility of this constitution of nature

That is how man, who can't survive except in society, was equipped by nature for the situation for which he was made. Each member of the human society needs help from the others, and is vulnerable to harm from them. When the needed help is given and returned from love, gratitude, friendship, and esteem, the society flourishes and is happy. Its different members are all bound together by the agreeable bands of love and affection. . . .

But even if the needed help is not given from such generous and disinterested motives, even if the different members of the society don't have love and affection for one another, the society won't necessarily fall apart, though it will be less happy and agreeable. Society can stay alive among different men, as it can among different merchants, from a sense of its utility, without any mutual love or affection. Even if no-one has any obligations or debts of gratitude to anyone else, society can still be held together by a *trade* [Smith says 'mercenary exchange'] in benefits, on the basis of agreed valuation for each benefit.

What society *can't* do is to survive among those who are constantly ready to harm and injure one another. The moment that injury begins, the moment that mutual resentment and hostility kick in, all society's bands are

snapped and its different members are (so to speak) dissipated and scattered around by the violence and opposition of their discordant affections [see here note on 'affection']. (If there is any society among robbers and murderers, they must at least. . . .abstain from robbing and murdering one another.) So beneficence is less essential than justice is to the existence of society; a lack of beneficence will make a society uncomfortable, but the prevalence of injustice will utterly destroy it.

That is why Nature, while urging mankind to acts of beneficence by the pleasing awareness of deserved reward, hasn't thought it necessary to guard and enforce beneficent conduct by the terrors of deserved punishment in case it should be neglected. Beneficence is an ornament that makes the building more beautiful, not the foundation that holds it up; so it's good that it should be •recommended, but it doesn't have to be •imposed. In contrast with that, justice is the main pillar that holds up the entire building. If it is removed, the whole of human society—

> the great, the *immense* structure whose creation and support seems to have been Nature's special care, her cherished project

—must in a moment crumble into atoms. In order to enforce the maintenance of justice, therefore, Nature has implanted in mankind the awareness of guilt, the terrors of deserved punishment that come with its violation, as the great safeguards of human society, to protect the weak, curb the violent, and punish the guilty. Although men are naturally sympathetic,

> •they feel so little for anyone with whom they have no special connection, compared with what they feel for themselves,
>
> •the misery of someone who is merely their fellow-creature matters so little to them in comparison with even a small convenience of their own, and
>
> •they have it so much in their power to harm their fellow-creature and may have so many temptations to do so,

that if this fear-of-punishment mechanism didn't go to work within them in the fellow-creature's defence, aweing them into a respect for his innocence, they would like wild beasts be ready at all times to attack him, and a man would enter an assembly of men as he enters a den of lions.

All through the universe we see means delicately adjusted to the ends they are intended to produce. In the mechanism of a plant or animal body we admire how everything is contrived for advancing the two great

purposes of nature—•the support of the individual and •the propagation of the species. But in everything like this we still distinguish the *cause* of the various motions and structures from their *purpose*. [Smith calls this distinguishing their 'efficient cause' from their 'final cause'.] The digestion of the food, the circulation of the blood,. . . .and so on are all operations that are necessary for the great purposes of animal life. But we don't try to *explain* them in terms of those purposes in the way one might explain them in terms of their efficient causes. We don't imagine that the blood circulates or the food digests of its own accord, *intending* to achieve the purposes of circulation or digestion. The wheels of a watch are admirably adjusted to the purpose for which it was made, telling the time. All their various motions work together in the most precise way to produce this effect. If they *wanted* and *intended* to tell the time, they couldn't do it better! But we attribute that desire and intention not to the wheels but to the watch-maker, and we know that what makes them move is a spring, which doesn't *intend* to produce its effect any more than they do. ·This is standard stuff·: When we are explaining the operations of **bodies**, we always in this way distinguish the cause from the purpose ['the efficient from the final cause']. Yet when we are explaining the operations of **minds**, we are apt to run these two different things together. When natural forces lead us to pursue purposes that a refined and enlightened reason would recommend to us, we're apt to think of that enlightened reason as though it were the efficient cause of the sentiments and actions by which we pursue our purpose. . . . On a superficial view, this cause seems sufficient to produce the effects that we credit it with, and the system of human nature seems to be simpler and more agreeable when all its different operations are in this way explained in terms of a single cause, ·namely *reason*·.

As society •cannot survive unless the laws of justice are mainly observed, and as social interactions •cannot take place among men who don't generally abstain from injuring one another; it has been thought that our awareness of this •necessity is what led us to approve of the enforcement of the laws of justice by the punishment of those who violated them. Here in more detail is how this line of thought goes:

> Man has a natural love for society, and wants the union of mankind to be preserved for its own sake, independently of whether he himself would get any benefit from it. The orderly and flourishing state of society is agreeable to him, and he loves the thought of it. He dislikes

social disorder and confusion, and is upset by anything that tends to produce it. He does also realize that his own welfare is connected with the prosperity of society, and that its preservation is needed for his happiness and perhaps for his survival. So he has every reason to hate anything that can tend to destroy society, and is willing to use every possible means to hinder such a hated and dreadful event. Injustice necessarily tends to destroy society. So every appearance of injustice alarms him, and he rushes to stop the progress of anything that would quickly put an end to all that is dear to him if it were allowed to continue unchecked. If he can't restrain it by gentle and fair means he must beat it down by force and violence—he must *somehow* put a stop to its further progress. That is why he often approves of the enforcement of the laws of justice through the punishment of those who violate them—even their *capital* punishment, which removes the disturber of the public peace from the world, and terrifies others by the example it sets.

That's what people commonly say about our approval of the punishment of injustice. And there is truth in it: we often have occasion to *confirm* our natural sense of the propriety and fitness of punishment by thinking about how necessary it is for preserving the order of society. When

- the guilty man is about to suffer the retaliation that mankind's natural indignation declares to be due to his crimes, and
- the insolence of his injustice is broken and humbled by his terror of the approaching punishment, and
- he is no longer someone to be feared, and for generous and humane people begins to be someone to be pitied,

the thought of what he is about to suffer extinguishes people's resentment towards him—resentment arising from the sufferings of his victims. They are disposed to pardon and forgive him, and to save him from the punishment that they had in their cool hours regarded as the proper retribution for such crimes. So here they look for help to considerations of the general interests of society. They counterbalance the impulse of this weak and partial humaneness by the dictates of a humanity that is more comprehensive. They reflect that mercy to the guilty is cruelty to the innocent, and they counter the emotions of compassion that they feel for a particular person by a broader compassion that they feel for mankind.

Sometimes too we find it appropriate to use the 'It's necessary for the support of society' defence ·not merely of punishment for injustice but also· of the propriety of observing the general rules of justice in the first place. We often hear the young and the restless ridiculing the most sacred rules of morality, and proclaiming the most abominable maxims of conduct—sometimes because they have become morally rotten but more often because of the emptiness of their hearts. Our indignation rises, and we are eager to refute and expose such detestable principles. Now, what initially inflames us against these principles is their intrinsic detestableness. [Smith then presents in a rather tangled form two lines of thought involving the claims that the principles in question

(a) are natural and proper objects of hatred and detestation,

(b) are ones that we hate and detest,

(c) ought to be condemned.

Defending **(c)** purely on the basis of **(b)** wouldn't appear to be conclusive (Smith says we think). It might be better to base **(c)** on **(b)** if that were based on **(a)**. But the fact is that when we are confronted by people who reject the basic principles of justice, it's not going to do any good to talk about actual or legitimate hatred and detestation because, Smith continues:] when we are asked 'Why shouldn't we do A?' the very question seems to show that doing A doesn't appear to the questioner to be ·in itself· a natural and proper object of hatred. So we must show him that A ought to be done for the sake of something else. And that is what starts us looking around for other arguments, and then what we come up with first is the disorder and confusion of society that would result from everyone's behaving unjustly. We seldom fail, therefore, to insist on this topic.

But although it's usually obvious that the welfare of society is put at risk by •licentious practices, that thought is seldom what first arouses us against •them. **All** men, even the most stupid and unthinking ones, loathe fraud, perfidy, and injustice, and are delighted to see them punished. But although it is obvious that justice is necessary for the existence of society, that's something that **few** men have ever thought about.

·I am contending that· what basically puts us in favour of the punishment of crimes against individuals is not our concern for the preservation of society. There are many obvious reasons for this. **(1)** Our concern for the fortune and happiness of •individuals doesn't ordinarily arise from our concern for the fortune and happiness of •society. This thought—

> ‘I am concerned for the destruction of that man, because he is a member or part of society,’

when said by someone who really cares about society as a whole, is as silly as this—

> ‘I am concerned for the loss of a single guinea, because it is a part of a thousand guineas’

when said by someone who really cares about a thousand guineas. In neither case does our concern for the individuals arise from our concern for the multitude; in each case our concern for the multitude is composed out of the particular concerns that we feel for the different individuals that make it up. When someone steals money from me, what motivates my prosecution of him is not a concern for the preservation of my whole fortune, but rather my concern for the particular sum that was stolen; and, similarly, when one man is harmed or destroyed, what motivates our demand that the perpetrator be punished is not our concern for the general interest of society, but rather our concern for that one individual person who has been harmed. [Smith goes on to distinguish *this* concern-for-the-individual from the delicately detailed concern that we might have for an individual friend, lover, mentor or the like. All we have here is a concern for someone because he is our fellow-creature. How we feel about him personally doesn’t come into it; or anyway it shouldn’t, though Smith admits that it is likely to do so, damping down our resentment of someone who has unjustly harmed a nasty victim.]

Sometimes indeed we both punish and approve of punishment purely on the grounds of the general interests of society, interests that we think can’t be secured without the punishment in question. All the punishments inflicted for breaches of. . . .military discipline are examples of this. Such crimes don’t immediately or directly harm any particular person; but it is thought that their remote consequences will or might included great harm to society. A sentinel who falls asleep on his watch suffers death by the laws of war, because such carelessness might endanger the whole army. This severity may often seem to be necessary, and therefore to be just and proper. . . . Yet this punishment, however necessary it may be, always appears to be excessively severe—a punishment so great for a crime seemingly so small. . . . A humane person must gather his thoughts, make an effort, and exert his whole firmness and resolution before he can bring himself either to inflict such a punishment or to go along with its being inflicted by others. This is different from his view of just punishment of an ungrateful murderer or

parricide, where his heart vigorously—even joyfully—applauds the just retaliation that seems right for such detestable crimes. . . . The very different sentiments with which the spectator views those different punishments shows that his approvals in the two cases are not based on the same principles. The spectator looks on the sentinel as an unfortunate victim, who indeed ought to be devoted to the safety of numbers, but whom still in his heart he would be glad to save; and he is only sorry that the interest of the many should oppose his being let off. But if the murderer escaped punishment, this would arouse the spectator's highest indignation, and he would call on God to avenge in another world the crime that mankind had wrongly neglected to punish on earth.

·A propos of that last point·: Notice that we're so far from imagining that injustice ought to be punished in this life merely in the interests of social order that can't otherwise be maintained, that •Nature teaches us to hope, and •religion (we suppose) authorises us to expect, that it will be punished even in a life to come. One might say that our sense of its ill desert pursues it beyond the grave, though the example of its punishment *there* can't serve to deter the rest of mankind—who don't see it, and don't know it—from being guilty of similar conduct *here*. But we think that the God's justice requires that he should hereafter avenge the injuries of the widow and the fatherless, who are so often harmed with impunity in this life. . . .

Section 3: The influence of luck on mankind's sentiments regarding the merit or demerit of actions

Whatever praise or blame can be due to any action must be based on

(1) the intention or affection of the heart from which the action comes,

(2) the external action or movement of the body which this affection causes, or

(3) the good or bad consequences that actually come from it.

These three constitute the whole nature and circumstances of the action, and must be the basis for any quality that belongs to it.

It is abundantly evident that **(2)** and **(3)** can't be a basis for any praise or blame, and no-one has ever said that they could. The **(2)** external action or movement of the body is often the same in the most innocent and in the most blameworthy actions. •Shooting a bird, •shooting a man—these are the same external movement, pulling the trigger of a gun. And **(3)** the consequences that actually happen to come from an action are as irrelevant to praise and blame as is the external movement of the body—even *more* irrelevant if that is possible! The consequences of the action depend not on the agent but on luck [Smith's word, here and throughout, is 'fortune'], so they can't be the proper basis for any sentiment of which the agent's character and conduct are the objects.

The only consequences for which he is accountable, or by which he can deserve either approval or disapproval of any kind, are ones that were in some way *intended*, or ·if not outright intended, then· at least show some agreeable or disagreeable quality in the intention from which the agent acted. So there we have it: any judgment of the action's rightness or wrongness, its beneficence or harmfulness of design, any praise or blame for it, any approval or disapproval, is just only if it is based on the intention or affection of the heart from which the action arose.

Everyone agrees with this thesis when it is stated, as here, in abstract and general terms; its obvious rightness is acknowledged by all the world, with no dissenting voice among all mankind. Everyone accepts that the accidental, unintended and unforeseen consequences of an action, however good they are, don't make the action a suitable object of gratitude if the intention or affection was malevolent; and however bad they are, they don't

make the action a suitable object of resentment if the intention or affection was good.

But however sure we are about this, stated in the abstract, when we get down to particular cases our sentiments concerning the merit or demerit of an action *are* in fact greatly affected—in one direction or the other—by what actual consequences happened to come from it. We all accept the rule that actual consequences are irrelevant to an action's moral status, and yet it hardly ever happens that our ·moral· sentiments are entirely regulated by it. This is an irregularity of sentiment that

everyone feels,
hardly anyone is sufficiently aware of, and
nobody is willing to acknowledge.

I now proceed to explain it, ·in three chapters, in which· I shall discuss **(1)** the cause of this irregularity, **(2)** the extent of its influence, and **(3)** the end purpose that ·God·, the Author of nature, seems to have intended by it.

Chapter 1: Sympathy

All causes of pain and pleasure—*all* of them—seem to immediately arouse gratitude and resentment in all animals. Those passions are aroused by inanimate as well as by animate objects. We are briefly angry even with the stone that hurts us; a child beats it, a dog barks at it, a bad-tempered man is apt to curse it. A moment's thought corrects this sentiment, making us realize that something that has no feeling is a very improper object of revenge! But when great harm has been done by an inanimate object, that object becomes disagreeable to us ever after, and we take pleasure in burning or destroying it. That is how we would treat something that had accidentally been the cause of the death of a friend, and we would often think ourselves guilty of a sort of inhumanity if we *didn't* vent this absurd sort of vengeance on it.

In the same way we have a sort of gratitude for inanimate objects that have caused great pleasure or frequent pleasure. The sailor escapes from a shipwreck with the help of a plank; if as soon as he gets back to land he uses the plank as firewood, he will strike us as being guilty of an unnatural action. We would have expected him to preserve the plank with care and affection, as a monument that was dear to him. After years of using a snuff-box, a pen-knife, and a walking-stick, a man grows fond of them and feels something like a real love and affection for them. If he breaks or loses them,

he is upset out of all proportion to the value of the damage. The house that we have long lived in, and the tree whose green shade we have long enjoyed, are both looked on with a sort of respect that such benefactors seem to be owed. The decay of the house or the death of the tree affects us with a kind of melancholy, even though it doesn't bring any loss to us. . . .

But for something to be a *proper* object of gratitude or resentment it must not only •cause pleasure or pain but must also •be capable of feeling them. If it doesn't have this capacity, there's no way for gratitude or resentment to be *satisfied* in relation to it. Having been aroused by the causes of pleasure and pain, those passions can be satisfied only by retaliating those sensations on what caused them; and there's no point in trying to do that with an object that isn't sentient. So animals are less improper objects of gratitude and resentment than inanimate objects. The dog that bites, the ox that gores, are both of them punished. If an animal causes someone's death, neither that person's relatives or the public in general will be satisfied unless the animal is put to death in its turn; not merely for •the security of the living, but also to some extent to •revenge the injury of the dead. On the other hand, animals that have been remarkably serviceable to their masters become objects of a lively gratitude. . . .

But. . . .animals are still far from being complete and perfect objects of gratitude or resentment. What gratitude wants most is not only •to make the benefactor feel pleasure in his turn, but •to make him aware that he is being rewarded for his past conduct, to make him pleased with that conduct, and to convince him that the person he helped was worth helping. What charms us most about our benefactor is the match between his sentiments and ours concerning the worth of our own character and the respect that is due to us. We are delighted to find someone who values us as we value ourselves, and picks us out from the rest of mankind in somewhat the way in which we pick out ourselves! One of our main purposes in rewarding him is to maintain in him these agreeable and flattering sentiments (though the best of us won't pursue this with the further purpose of getting new favours from the benefactor). And this is the reason for something that I pointed out earlier, namely that when we can't enter into the motives of our benefactor, when his conduct and character appear unworthy of our approval, our gratitude for his services to us—however great they have been—is significantly lessened. We are less flattered by his picking us out for special

favour; and keeping the respect of such a weak or worthless patron seems not to be something worth pursuing for its own sake.

On the other hand, the chief purpose of resentment is not merely to make our enemy feel pain in his turn, but to make him aware that he is feeling pain because of his past conduct, to make him repent of that conduct, and to make him feel that the person he injured didn't deserve to be treated in that manner. What chiefly enrages us against the man who injures or insults us is his writing us off as insignificant, his unreasonable preference for himself over us, and the absurd self-love that apparently leads him to imagine that other people may be sacrificed at any time for his convenience or at his whim. The glaring impropriety of this conduct, the gross insolence and injustice that it seems to involve, often shock and exasperate us more than all the harm that we have suffered. To bring him back to a better sense of what is due to other people, to make him aware of what he owes us and of the wrong that he has done to us, is often the main purpose of our revenge, which is always incomplete when it can't accomplish this. . . .

Thus, before anything can be a complete and proper object of either gratitude or resentment it must possess three different qualifications. **(1)** It must be the cause of pleasure in one case, of pain in the other. **(2)** It must be capable of feeling those sensations. **(3)** It must not merely have produced those sensations but must have done so from design—a design that is approved of in one case and disapproved of in the other. It's **(1)** that makes an object capable of arousing gratitude and resentment; it's because of **(2)** that these passions can in some way be satisfied; and **(3)** is not only needed for the gratitude or resentment to be complete, but also provides an extra cause of those passions because of the special and intense pleasure or pain that it involves.

The sole arousing cause of gratitude is something that gives pleasure; so that even when a person's intentions are utterly proper and beneficent, if he has failed actually to produce the good that he intended, less gratitude seems to be due to him because one of the arousing causes is lacking. And the sole arousing cause of resentment is something that gives pain; so that even when a person's intentions are utterly improper and malevolent, if he has failed actually to produce the evil that he intended, less resentment seems to be due to him because one of the arousing causes is lacking. [Smith really does move from 'the sole cause' to 'one of the causes', a move that he needs for his conclusion about 'less' gratitude or resentment rather than *none*.] On the other hand, even when a

person's intentions don't have any laudable degree of benevolence, if his actions *happen* to produce great good, because one of the arousing causes has occurred some gratitude is apt to arise towards him—a shadow of merit seems to fall on him. And when a person's intentions don't have any blameworthy degree of malice, if his actions should *happen* to produce great evil, because one of the arousing causes has occurred some resentment is apt to arise towards him—a shadow of demerit seems to fall on him. And, as the consequences of actions are entirely under the dominance of luck [remember that Smith's word throughout is 'fortune'], what I have been describing is the source of luck's influence on the sentiments of mankind regarding merit and demerit.

Chapter 2: The extent of this influence of luck

The effect of this influence of luck is **(1)** to lessen our sense of the merit or demerit of actions that arose from praiseworthy or blameworthy intentions but failed to produce their intended effects; and **(2)** to increase our sense of the merit or demerit of actions, beyond what is due to the motives or affections that they come from, when they accidentally give rise to either extraordinary pleasure or extraordinary pain. ·This chapter will be devoted to discussions of these two effects·.

(1) To repeat the point: however proper and beneficent (or improper and malevolent) a person's intentions in acting are, if the intended effect doesn't happen his merit seems imperfect (or his demerit seems incomplete). This irregularity of sentiment is felt not only •by those who are immediately affected by the consequences of the action in question but also to some extent even •by the impartial spectator. ·In discussing this matter, I shall start with failed •good intentions and then turn to failed •bad ones·.

(1a). . . .It is often said that we are equally obliged to •a man who has tried to help us and to •one who actually did so. That's the speech that we regularly make after every unsuccessful attempt of this kind; but like all other fine speeches it mustn't be taken too strictly. The sentiments that a generous-minded man has for the friend who fails ·to help him· may often be nearly the same as what he feels for the one who succeeds; and the more generous he is the nearer his sentiments will come to that level. [For 'generous' see note here.] A truly generous-minded man will get more pleasure from—and be more grateful for—•the love and respect he gets from people he thinks to be worthy of respect than for all the •advantages he can ever expect to flow

from that love and respect. So when he loses those advantages he seems to be losing only a trifle that is hardly worth thinking about. But still he does lose *something*, so that his pleasure and gratitude are not perfectly complete. Therefore, as between the friend who fails and the friend who succeeds, other things being equal, the noblest and best mind will have some little difference of affection in favour of the one who succeeds. Indeed, people are so unjust about this that even when the intended benefit is procured, they are apt to think that less gratitude is due to the benefactor if he wasn't the sole producer of the benefit. . . .

Even the merit of talents and abilities that some accident has prevented from producing their effects seems somewhat imperfect, even to people who are fully convinced that the person does have the capacity to produce those effects. [Smith gives the example of a general whose battle plans were excellent but who is robbed of victory by political interference from his own side:] Although he might deserve all the approval that is due to a great military plan, he still lacks the actual merit of having performed a great action. . . . It angers an architect when his plans are either not carried out at all, or carried out with so many alterations that the effect of the building is spoiled. The only thing that depends on the architect is *the plan*; and good judges can see his genius being revealed in that as completely as in the actual building. But even to those who know most about such things a •plan doesn't give the same pleasure as does a •noble and magnificent building. . . . There may be many men of whom we believe 'He is more talented than Caesar and Alexander; placed in the situations they were in, he would perform still greater feats'. But in the mean time, however, we don't view such a man with the wonder and admiration with which those two heroes have been regarded in all ages and nations. The calm judgments of the mind may approve of him more, but the mind isn't dazzled and carried away by the splendour of great actions. . . .

(1b) Just as the merit of an unsuccessful attempt to do good seems to ungrateful mankind to be lessened if the attempt fails, so also does the demerit of an unsuccessful attempt to do evil. The plan to commit a crime, however clearly it is proved to exist, is hardly ever punished with the same severity as the actual commission of the crime. The only exception to this may be the crime of *treason*. Because that crime immediately affects the existence of the government itself, the government is naturally more touchy about it than about any other. When the sovereign punishes •other crimes,

he is acting on the resentment that he feels through sympathy with the victims of the crimes. But when he punishes •treason, he is acting on *his own* resentment of harm done to *himself*. So that here he is judging in his own cause, which makes him apt to be more violent and bloody in his punishments than the impartial spectator can approve of. Also, when treason is involved, it takes less to trigger the sovereign's resentment, which doesn't always wait for the committing of the crime or even for the attempt to commit it. A treasonable conspiracy, though nothing has been done or even attempted as a result of it—indeed a mere treasonable *conversation*—is in many countries punished in the same way as the actual commission of treason. With any other crime, the mere design—with no attempt to carry it through—is seldom punished at all, and is never punished severely. This may be said:

> 'A criminal •design doesn't necessarily involve the same degree of depravity as a criminal •action, and therefore shouldn't be subjected to the same punishment. We are capable of •deciding, and even of taking steps towards performing, many things that—when it comes to the point—we feel ourselves entirely incapable of •doing.'

But this line of thought doesn't apply when the design has been carried through to the last attempt. Yet there is hardly any country where the man who fires a pistol at his enemy but misses him is punished with death. . . . But mankind's resentment against the crime of murder is so intense, and their fear of the man who shows himself capable of committing it is so great, that the mere attempt to commit it ought in all countries to be a capital offence. The attempt to commit smaller crimes is almost always punished lightly, and sometimes is not punished at all. The thief whose hand has been caught in his neighbour's pocket before he had taken anything out of it is punished only with the disgrace of being exposed as a thief; if he'd had time to steal a handkerchief, he would have been put to death. The burglar who has been found setting a ladder to his neighbour's window but hasn't gone through the window is not exposed to capital punishment. The attempt to ravish a woman is not punished as a rape. The attempt to seduce a married woman is not punished at all, though ·successful· seduction is punished severely. Our resentment against someone who tried and failed to commit a crime is seldom strong enough to lead us to punishment in the way we would have thought proper if he had succeeded. In the failure case, our joy at being spared the actual crime alleviates •our sense of the atrocity

of his conduct; in the success case, the grief of our misfortune increases •it. Yet his real demerit is undoubtedly the same in both cases, since his intentions were equally criminal; and there is in this respect, therefore, an irregularity in the sentiments of all men, and a consequent relaxation of discipline in the laws of, I believe, all nations the most civilized as well as the most barbarous. [The 'irregularity' Smith speaks of is just the phenomenon of our accepting a general rule—Latin *regula*—and then having sentiments that don't conform to it. We'll meet the term again.]. . . .

[Smith next writes about the fundamentally decent person who somehow gets involved in planning a crime, and is prevented from succeeding by some accident. He must think that this was a lucky rescue, saving him from spending 'the rest of his life in horror, remorse, and repentance'. He knows that his heart is as guilty as it would have been if he had succeeded, but his failure to commit the crime eases his conscience so that he 'considers himself as less deserving of punishment and resentment' than he would have been if he has succeeded.]

(2) The second effect of this influence of luck is to increase our sense of the merit (or demerit) of actions beyond what is due to the motives or feelings that produce them, when they happen to cause extraordinary pleasure (or pain). . . . For example, a messenger who brings bad news is disagreeable to us, whereas we feel a sort of gratitude to the man who brings us good news. For a moment we regard them as the authors of our good fortune (in one case) and of our bad fortune (in the other), looking at them rather as though they had really *brought about* the events that they only report to us. [Smith goes into some details about this, concluding thus:] King Tigranes of Armenia struck off the head of the man who brought him the first account of the approach of a formidable enemy. To punish the bringer of bad news in this way seems barbarous and inhuman; but rewarding the messenger bringing good news is not disagreeable to us—we think it suitable to the generosity of kings. Why do we make this distinction when if there's no fault in the one there's no merit in the other? It is because any sort of reason seems sufficient to authorize the expressing of the social and benevolent affections, whereas it requires the most solid and substantial reasons to make us sympathetic to the expression of unsocial and malevolent ones.

. . . .There is a class of exceptions to this general rule that no-one should be punished for conduct that wasn't based on malicious and unjust

intentions. When someone's *negligence* has caused unintended harm to someone else, we generally enter into the sufferer's resentment far enough to approve of his punishing the offender far more than his offence would have appeared to deserve if no such unlucky consequence had followed from it.

There is a level of negligence that would appear to deserve some punishment even if it didn't harm anyone, Suppose someone threw a large stone over a wall into a public street, without warning anyone and without considering where it was likely to fall. *He* would undoubtedly deserve some punishment. A really precise penal law would punish this absurd action even if it did no harm. The person who is guilty of it shows that he insolently regards the happiness and safety of others as negligible. There is real injustice in his conduct. He recklessly exposes his neighbour to a risk that no man in his senses would choose to expose himself to, and evidently lacks the sense of what is due to his fellow-creatures that is the basis of justice and of society. Gross negligence therefore is said in the law to be almost equal to malicious design. When such carelessness happens to have bad consequences, the guilty person is often punished as if he had really *intended* those consequences; and his conduct, which was really only •thoughtless and insolent and deserving of *some* punishment, is considered as •atrocious and as liable to the severest punishment. If the stone-throwing action that I have mentioned should accidentally kill a man, the laws of many countries—particularly by the old law of Scotland—will condemn the stone-thrower to death. This is no doubt too severe, but it's not altogether inconsistent with our natural sentiments. Our just indignation against the folly and inhumanity of the man's conduct is intensified by our sympathy with the unfortunate sufferer. But nothing would appear more shocking to our natural sense of fairness than to bring a man to the scaffold merely for having thrown a stone carelessly into the street without harming any body. The folly and inhumanity of his conduct would be the same in this case ·as in the case where a passer-by is killed by the stone·, but our sentiments would be different. Thinking about this difference can show us how much the indignation of the spectator is apt to be worked up by the actual consequences of the action. In cases of this kind. I think, there is a great degree of severity in the laws of almost all nations. . . .

There's another degree of negligence that doesn't involve in it any sort of injustice. The person who is guilty of it treats his neighbours as he treats

himself, means no harm to anyone, and is far from having an insolent disregard for the safety and happiness of others. But he isn't as careful and circumspect in his conduct as he ought to be, and for that reason he deserves some kind of blame and censure, but no sort of punishment. However, if by a negligence of this kind he causes harm to another person, the laws of every country (I believe) will require him to pay compensation. No doubt this is a real punishment, and no-one would have thought of inflicting it on him if it hadn't been for the unlucky accident that his conduct caused; yet this decision of the law is approved of by the natural sentiments of all mankind. Nothing, we think, can be more just than that one man should not suffer through someone else's carelessness, and that the damage caused by culpable negligence should be paid for by the person who was guilty of it.

[Smith now gives us a whole page about a still lower level of negligence, which consists in not acting with 'the most anxious timidity and circumspection', i.e. with a kind of caution that would be a fault, not a virtue—a fault because life can't satisfactorily be lived with *that* much concern for possible bad consequences. If one person hurts another through this kind of 'negligence', it is usual and natural for him to apologize and express his concern for the sufferer's welfare, and (if he is a decent person) he will offer compensation for the damage he has done and do what he can to soothe the resentment that the sufferer is likely to feel. Smith continues:] To make no apology, to offer no atonement, is regarded ·by us all· as the highest brutality. Yet why should he apologize more than anyone else? Why should he, since he was as innocent as any other bystander, be thus singled out from among all mankind to make up for someone else's bad luck? This task wouldn't have been imposed on him if it weren't for the fact that the impartial spectator feels some indulgence for what may be regarded as the unjust resentment of the sufferer. [Here and in one other place, Smith speaks of 'animal resentment', evidently meaning 'resentment that is *natural* but not defensible through any acceptable general moral principles'.]

Chapter 3: The purpose of this irregularity of sentiments

That is how the good or bad consequences of an action affect the sentiments both of the agent and of others; so that is how luck ['fortune'], which governs the world, has influence in the area where we should be least willing to allow it any, and partly directs the sentiments of mankind regarding the

character and conduct both of themselves and of others. *Everyone judges by the outcome, and not by the design*—that has been the complaint down through the ages, and is the great discouragement of virtue. Everyone agrees to the •general maxim that because the outcome doesn't depend on the agent it oughtn't to influence our sentiments regarding the merit or propriety of his conduct. But our sentiments in •particular cases almost never exactly conform to what this reasonable maxim would require. The happy or unprosperous outcome of any action not only •is apt to give us a good or bad opinion of the prudence with which it was conducted, but nearly always also •sparks our gratitude or resentment, our sense of the merit or demerit of the design.

But when Nature planted the seeds of this irregularity in the human breast, she seems to have intended—as she always does—the happiness and perfection of our species. If the *only* causes of our •resentment were the harmfulness of the design and the malevolence of the affection, we would feel all the furies of •that passion against anyone whom we suspected of having such designs or affections, even if they had never broken out into any action. Sentiments, thoughts, intentions, would become objects of punishment; and if the indignation of mankind ran as high against them as against actions—if the baseness of a •thought that didn't lead to any action seemed to us all to call as loudly for vengeance as the baseness of the •action—every court of law would become a real inquisition. There would be no safety for the most innocent and cautious conduct. Bad wishes, bad views, bad designs, might still be suspected. . . .and would expose the person to punishment and resentment just as bad actions do. So the Author of nature has seen to it that the only proper and approved objects of human punishment and resentment are *actions*—actions that either •produce actual evil or •try to produce it and thereby put us in the immediate fear of it. According to cool reason, human actions derive their whole merit or demerit from •sentiments, designs, affections; but ·God·, the great Judge of hearts has placed •these outside the scope of every human jurisdiction, reserving them to be considered in his own unerring tribunal. This salutary and useful irregularity in human sentiments regarding merit or demerit, which at first sight appears so absurd and indefensible, is the basis for the necessary rule of justice that men in this life are liable to punishment only for their actions and not for their designs and intentions. In fact, when we look carefully into any part of nature we find this sort of evidence of the

providential care of its Author—we can admire the wisdom and goodness of God even in the weakness and folly of man.

Here's another irregularity of sentiments that has some utility: the merit of an unsuccessful attempt to do something good appears to be imperfect; and the merit of mere good inclinations and kind wishes is even more so. Man was made for action—to exercise his faculties to promote changes in the external circumstances both of himself and others in ways that seem most favourable to the happiness of all. He mustn't be satisfied with slack benevolence, or see himself as the friend of mankind because in his heart he wishes well to the prosperity of the world! The purpose of his existence is to produce certain states of affairs; Nature wants him to call forth the whole vigour of his soul and to strain every nerve to produce them; so she has taught him that neither he nor anyone else can whole-heartedly applaud or be fully satisfied with his conduct unless he actually produces them. . . . The man who hasn't performed a single action of importance, but whose whole conversation and manner express the justest, the noblest, and most generous sentiments, isn't entitled to demand any high reward even if his inutility is purely due to his having had no opportunity to serve. . . . We can still ask him: 'What have you done? What actual service can you point to that entitles you to such a large reward? We respect you and love you, but we don't owe you anything.' It would take •the most divine benevolence to reward the virtue that has been useless only because there has been no opportunity to serve, giving it the honours and preferments that it may be said to deserve but wasn't entitled to insist on. On the other hand, to punish mere affections of the heart where no crime has been committed is •insolent and barbarous tyranny. The benevolent affections seem to deserve most praise when they are acted on quickly (rather than being delayed until it becomes almost a crime not to act on them!); whereas it's almost impossible for a malevolent affection to be too tardy, too slow, or deliberate in being acted on.

It is important that the evil that is done without design should be regarded as a misfortune to the doer as well as to the sufferer. By having that attitude, man is taught to reverence the happiness of his brethren, to tremble lest he should unknowingly do anything that can harm them, and to fear the animal resentment that he feels is ready to burst out against him if he should unintentionally be the unhappy instrument of their calamity. ·Here is a kind of model or metaphor for the point I want to make·:

> In the ancient heathen religion, holy ground that had been consecrated to some god was not to be walked on except on solemn and necessary occasions. Someone who violated this, even if he did it in ignorance, became piacular from that moment, and until proper atonement was made he was vulnerable to the vengeance of the powerful and invisible being for whom that ground had been set apart.

[To be 'piacular' is to be in a state in which one needs to make atonement, to expiate, for something one has done.] Now compare that with this:

> By the wisdom of Nature the happiness of every innocent man is made holy, consecrated, hedged round against the approach of every other man; not to be wantonly walked on, and not even to be in any way violated, even ignorantly and unintentionally, without requiring some expiation, some atonement in proportion to the magnitude of the unintended violation.

A humane man who accidentally and with absolutely *no* blameworthy negligence has been the cause of the death of another man feels that he is •piacular, though not •guilty. During his whole life he regards this accident as one of the greatest misfortunes that could have befallen him. If the family of the slain man is poor and he himself is fairly well off, he immediately takes them under his protection. . . .and thinks them entitled to every degree of favour and kindness. If they are wealthier than he is, he tries by every submission, by every expression of sorrow, by giving them any service that he can devise and they will accept, to atone for what has happened and to placate as much as possible their resentment for the great though unintended offence that he has given them. (Their resentment is certainly most unjust, but it is also natural.)

[Smith adds a paragraph about the role of this aspect of the human condition—'this fallacious sense of guilt'—in theatrical drama. Of Oedipus and Jocasta he says that they are both 'in the highest degree piacular' though neither is 'in the smallest degree guilty'.]

Despite all these seeming irregularities of sentiment, if a man has the bad luck to cause evils that he didn't intend, or to fail in producing good that he did intend, Nature hasn't left his innocence with no consolation or his virtue with no reward. What the man does is to get help from that just and equitable maxim: *Outcomes that didn't depend on our conduct ought not to lessen the respect that is due to us*. He summons up his whole magnanimity

and firmness of soul, and works to regard himself not in the light in which he does at present appear, but in the light

- in which he ought to appear,
- in which he would have appeared if his generous plans had met with success, and
- in which he would be appearing now, despite the plans' failure, if mankind's sentiments were entirely just and fair, or even entirely consistent with themselves.

The more just and humane part of mankind entirely go along with this effort he is making to support himself in his own opinion. They exert their whole generosity of mind to correct in themselves this irregularity of human nature, and try to regard his unlucky good intention in the light in which, if it had been successful, they would have been naturally disposed to consider it, without any such moral effort.

Part III: Moral judgments on ourselves; the sense of duty

Chapter 1: The principle of self-approval and self-disapproval
Chapter 2: The love of praise and of praiseworthiness; the dread of blame and of blameworthiness
Chapter 3: The influences and authority of conscience
Chapter 4: The nature of self-deceit, and the origin and use of general rules
Chapter 5: The influence and authority of the general rules of morality, and why they are rightly regarded as the laws of the Deity
Chapter 6: When should the sense of duty be the sole driver of our conduct? and when should it co-operate with other motives?

Chapter 1: The principle of self-approval and self-disapproval

Up to here I have chiefly considered the origin and foundation of our judgments concerning the sentiments and conduct of others. I now turn to the origin of our judgments concerning our own sentiments and conduct.

The principle by which we naturally either approve or disapprove of our own conduct seems to be exactly the one by which we make such judgments about the conduct of other people. We approve (or disapprove) of another man's conduct according to whether, when we bring his case home to ourselves, we feel that we can (or cannot) entirely sympathize with the sentiments and motives that directed it. And in the same way we approve (or disapprove) of our own conduct according to whether, when we adopt the situation of a spectator, viewing our conduct with his eyes (so to speak) and from his standpoint, we feel that we can (or cannot) entirely enter into and sympathize with the sentiments and motives that influenced it. The only way we can survey our own •sentiments and motives, and the only way we can form any judgment about them, is to remove ourselves (so to speak) from our own natural station and try to view •them as from a certain distance; and our only way of doing *that* is by trying to view them with the eyes of other people, or as other people are likely to view them. Thus, any judgment we form about our own conduct tacitly refers to what others

- •do judge concerning them,
- •would judge concerning them if certain conditions were satisfied, or
- •ought to judge concerning them.

We try to examine our own conduct as we imagine any other fair and impartial spectator would examine it. If when we place ourselves in his situation we thoroughly enter into all the passions and motives that influenced it, we approve of it by sympathy with the approval of this supposed fair judge. If otherwise, we enter into his disapproval, and condemn the conduct. ·I'll restate the 'approval' side of this story in different terms, just to make sure that it's clear to you. My judgment that my conduct is morally proper involves *two* exercises of sympathy: **(1)** the imagined spectator's sympathy with my actual motives and feelings, which leads to *his* having such feelings; then **(2)** my sympathy with those feelings

of the spectator's. So I can *enter into* the mind-set that led me to act as I did by entering into an imagined mind-set that enters into the actual mind-set that led me to act·.

If it were possible for a human creature to grow to adulthood without any communication with other humans, he couldn't have thoughts about •his own character, about the propriety or demerit of •his own sentiments and conduct, about •the beauty or ugliness of his own mind, any more than he could think about •the beauty or ugliness of his own face. These are all things that he can't easily see and naturally doesn't look at, and he isn't equipped with any mirror that can present them to his view. But now bring him into society, and he immediately has the mirror that he lacked before. It is placed in the faces and behaviour of those he lives with, which always signal when those people enter into his sentiments and when they disapprove of them; and that is what gives him his first view of the propriety and impropriety of his own passions, the beauty and ugliness of his own mind. ·I have been talking about how **hard** it would be for a solitary man to think about his own motives and conduct, but as well as being hard it would be **uninteresting** for him to do so·. If a man had been from his birth a stranger to society, his whole attention would be focussed on the objects of his passions, the external bodies that either pleased or harmed him. As for those passions themselves. . . ., although they would be more immediately present to him than anything else, he would hardly ever think *about* them. The idea of them couldn't interest him enough to call on his attentive consideration. The thought of his •joy couldn't cause any new joy, or the idea of his •sorrow any new sorrow, although thoughts about the *causes* of •those passions might often arouse both. But then, bring him into society and all his own passions will immediately become the causes of new passions. He will observe that mankind approve of some of them, and this will elate him; and that they are disgusted by others, which will cast him down. His desires and aversions, his joys and sorrows, will now often cause new desires and new aversions, new joys and new sorrows; so they will now interest him deeply, and often call on his most attentive consideration. [In this paragraph, the notion of what will 'interest' the man may be partly the notion of what will *be in his interests*.]

[Smith now compares that with our thoughts about our own physical beauty or ugliness, summing up thus:] It's obvious that we are concerned about our own beauty and ugliness only because of its effect on others. If

we had no connection with society, we would be altogether indifferent about both.

In the same way our first moral criticisms are directed at the characters and conduct of other people; and we are all conscious of how each of these affects us. But we soon learn that other people are equally frank about our own character and conduct. We become concerned to know how far we deserve their censure or applause. . . . So we start to examine our own passions and conduct, and to think about how these must appear to them by thinking about how they would appear to us if we were in the situation of the others. We suppose ourselves to be the spectators of our own behaviour, and try to imagine what effect our conduct would have on us when seen in this light. That's the only mirror in which we can, with the eyes of other people, have some kind of view of the propriety of our own conduct. . . .

Whenever I try to examine my own conduct—whenever I try to pass sentence on it, and either approve or condemn it—it's obvious •that I divide myself into two persons (so to speak), and •that in my role as examiner and judge I represent a different character [Smith's exact phrase] from that of myself as the person whose conduct is examined and judged. One is the **spectator**, whose sentiments concerning •my own conduct I try to enter into by placing myself in his situation and considering how •it would appear to me when seen from that particular point of view. The other is the **agent**, the person whom I properly call 'myself', the person about whose conduct I as spectator was trying to form some opinion. The first is the judge, the second the person judged. But the judge can't be in every respect the same as the person judged of, any more than a cause can be in every respect the same as the effect.

To be likeable and to be praiseworthy—i.e. to deserve love and to deserve reward—are the great characters [Smith's word] of virtue; and to be odious and punishable are the great characters of vice. But all these characters immediately bring in the sentiments of others. Virtue is said to be likeable or praiseworthy not •because it is an object of *its own* love or gratitude but •because it arouses those sentiments in other men. The inward tranquillity and self-satisfaction that naturally accompany virtue are caused by the awareness of being an object of such favourable regards, just as the inner torment that naturally accompanies vice results from the suspicion that one is viewed with disfavour. What can be a greater happiness than to

be beloved, and to know that we deserve to be beloved? What can be a greater misery than to be hated, and to know that we deserve to be hated?

Chapter 2: The love of praise and of praiseworthiness; the dread of blame and of blameworthiness

Man naturally desire, not only to be loved but to be lovely, i.e. to be a natural and proper object of love. He naturally fears not only to be hated but to be hateful, i.e. a natural and proper object of hatred. [That used to be the only standard meaning of 'hateful'; is still is standard except in the USA where a 'hateful' person is one who is full of hate.] He wants not only praise but praiseworthiness, i.e. to be a natural and proper object of praise, whether or not anyone actually praises him. He fears not only blame but blameworthiness, i.e. to be a natural and proper object of blame, whether or not anyone actually blames him.

The love of praiseworthiness is emphatically *not* derived solely from the love of praise. Those two drives resemble one another, are connected, and often blend with one another, but they are in many respects distinct and independent of one another.

The love and admiration that we naturally have for those whose character and conduct we approve of necessarily lead us to want to become, ourselves, objects of such agreeable sentiments, and to be as likeable and admirable as those whom we love and admire the most. Our intense desire to excel is based on our admiration of the excellence of others. And we aren't satisfied with being merely admired for qualities that get other people to be •admired; we have to at least *believe* that we are admirable for qualities that make other people •admirable. But to satisfy this desire we must become the impartial spectators of our own character and conduct, trying to view them with other peoples' eyes, or as other people are likely to view them. If our character and conduct when seen in this light appear to us as we wish, we are happy and contented. But this happiness and contentment are greatly confirmed if we find that other people, when they view our character and conduct with the actual eyes that we were only imagining ourselves viewing them with, see them in precisely the way we had imagined ourselves seeing them. This approval from other people necessarily confirms our own self-approval. Their praise necessarily strengthens our own sense of our praiseworthiness. In this case, far from the love of praiseworthiness being derived solely from the love of praise, the love of praise seems to a large extent to be derived from the love of praiseworthiness.

The most sincere praise can't give us much pleasure when it can't be regarded as evidence that we are praiseworthy. It won't satisfy us to have esteem and admiration bestowed on us through some kind of ignorance or mistake. . . . The man who applauds us either for actions that we didn't perform or for motives that had no influence on our conduct is really applauding not us but someone else. We can get no satisfaction from that. That kind of praise should be more humiliating than any blame, and should perpetually bring to our minds the most humbling of all reflections, namely the thought of what we •ought to be but •are not. . . . To be pleased with such groundless applause is a proof of the most superficial levity and weakness. It is what is properly called 'vanity', and is the basis for the most ridiculous and contemptible vices, namely the vices of affectation and common lying. [Smith scornfully presents two examples: a fool who tries to attract admiration by telling lying stories about adventures he has come through, and the self-important idiot who parades himself as someone with 'rank and distinction' that he knows he doesn't have. Smith continues with an acute psychological account of such people:] They look on themselves not in •the light in which they know they ought to appear to their companions, but in •the light in which they believe their companions actually look on them. Their superficial weakness and trivial folly prevent them from ever looking *into* themselves, seeing themselves in the way (their consciences must tell them) that everyone would see them if the real truth were known.

Matching the fact that ignorant and groundless praise can give no solid joy, no satisfaction that will bear serious examination, is the fact that

> it is often really comforting to reflect that although no praise has been actually bestowed on us, our conduct has deserved praise, having entirely conformed to the measures and rules by which praise and approval are naturally and commonly bestowed. We are pleased not only with praise but also with having acted in a praiseworthy way.

We are pleased to think that we have made ourselves natural objects of approval, even if no approval has ever actually been bestowed on us; just as we are humiliated by the thought that we have deserved the blame of those we live with, even if we have never been actually blamed. The man who is aware of having behaved in exactly the ways that experience tells him are generally agreeable reflects with satisfaction on the propriety of •his own behaviour. When he views •it in the light in which the impartial spectator

would view it, he thoroughly enters into all the motives that influenced it. He looks back on every part of it with pleasure and approval, and even if mankind are never acquainted with what he has done, he looks at himself not as they *do* regard him but as they *would* regard him if they were better informed. . . . Men have voluntarily thrown away life to acquire after death a renown that they could no longer enjoy. While they still lived they imaginatively anticipated the fame that was in future times to be bestowed on them. The applause that they were never to hear rang in their ears; and the thoughts of the admiration whose effects they were never to feel •played about their hearts, •banished from their breasts the strongest of all natural fears, and •led them to perform actions that seem almost beyond the reach of human nature. But in point of reality there is surely no great difference between •the approval that won't be given until we can no longer enjoy it and •the approval that won't ever be given but would be if the world ever came to understand properly the facts about how we have behaved. If the former often produces such violent effects, it's not surprising that the other should always be highly regarded.

When Nature formed man for society, she endowed him with **(1)** a basic desire to please his brethren and a basic aversion to offending them. She taught him to feel pleasure in their favourable regard and pain in their unfavourable regard. She made their approval most flattering and most agreeable to him for its own sake, and their disapproval most humiliating and most offensive.

But this alone wouldn't have equipped him for the society for which he was made. So Nature endowed him not only with a desire to be approved of but also with **(2)** a desire to be something that *ought* to be approved of, or a desire to be what he himself approves of in other men. Desire **(1)** could only have made him wish to *appear to be* fit for society; to be concerned about really *being* fit, he needed desire **(2)**. . . . In every well-formed mind desire **(2)** seems to be the stronger of the two. Only the weakest and most superficial of mankind can be much delighted with praise that they themselves know to be altogether unmerited. [Smith goes on at some length about the attitude of 'a wise man', to whom what matters above all is to deserve approval, whether or not he actually gets it from anyone.]

To want praise when none is due—or even to *accept* praise when it is not due—can only be the effect of the most contemptible vanity. To want it when it is really due is to want merely that a most essential act of justice

should be done to us. The love of just fame or true glory, even for its own sake and independently of any advantage one might get from it, is not unworthy even of a wise man. But such a man sometimes neglects and even despises fame of that kind; and he is most likely to do so when he is absolutely confident of the perfect propriety of every part of his own conduct. When this is so, his self-approval doesn't need to be confirmed by the approval of other men. It is sufficient on its own, and he is contented with it. This self-approval is the principal object (if not indeed the only one) about which he can or ought to be concerned. The love of it is the love of virtue.

Just as the love and admiration that we naturally have for some others dispose us to want to become ourselves the proper objects of such agreeable sentiments, so also the hatred and contempt that we equally naturally have for some others dispose us, perhaps even more strongly, to dread the very thought of resembling them in any respect. And here again what we fear is less the thought of being hated and despised than the thought of being hateful and despicable. . . . The man who has broken through all the measures of conduct that could make him agreeable to mankind may have the most perfect assurance that what he has done will for ever be concealed from every human eye; but that won't do him any good. When he looks back on his behaviour and views with the eyes of an impartial spectator, he finds that he can't enter into any of the motives that influenced it. He. . . .feels a high degree of the shame that he would be exposed to if his actions were ever to be generally known. . . . And if what he has been guilty of is not merely wrong actions that would be objects of simple disapproval, but an enormous crime that would arouse detestation and resentment, he can never think of it. . . .without feeling all the agony of horror and remorse. [Smith adds colourful detail about the 'natural pangs of an affrighted conscience' that can't be allayed by convincing oneself that there is no God. He says that some terrible criminals have confessed to their crimes when they were not under suspicion. He continues with this theme:] They hoped by their death •to reconcile themselves, at least in their own imagination, to the natural sentiments of mankind; •to be able to consider themselves as less worthy of hatred and resentment; •to atone in some measure for their crimes, and by thus becoming objects of compassion rather than of horror, if possible •to die in peace and with the forgiveness of all their fellow-

creatures. Compared to what they felt before the discovery, even the thought of this, it seems, was happiness. . . .

Only the most frivolous and superficial of mankind can be much delighted with praise that they know they don't in the least deserve. But undeserved reproach is often capable of humiliating even men of more than ordinary constancy. . . . Such a man is humbled to find that anyone should have such a low view of his character as to suppose him capable of being guilty of whatever it is he is accused of. Though he is perfectly conscious of his innocence, the very accusation often seems to throw—even in his own imagination—a shadow of disgrace and dishonour on his character. . . . An innocent man who is brought to the scaffold by the false accusation of an odious crime suffers the cruelest misfortune that it is possible for innocence to suffer. . . .

[For someone to whom this happens, Smith says, religion offers some consolation: the only thing that can 'strike terror into triumphant vice' is also the only thing that offers 'consolation to disgraced and insulted innocence'. There is not much consolation to be drawn from 'the humble philosophy that confines its views to this life'.]

[Continuing with this enormously long chapter [25 bookpages], Smith now presents two pages of details of how various kinds of people handle **(1)** unmerited applause and **(2)** unmerited disapproval. Its main point is that a good person won't get pleasure from **(1)** but will get pain from **(2)**. If he tries to shrug either of these off by telling the world 'I didn't do it', he is more likely to be believed in **(1)** than in **(2)**. And there's something else that makes unmerited disapproval hard for a good man to take:] He knows perfectly what he has done, but perhaps no-one can know for sure what he himself is capable of doing. . . . He may be confident that the unfavourable judgment of his neighbours is wrong, but his confidence can't often be strong enough to block his neighbours' judgment from making some impression upon him. . . .

I should point out that •how much importance we attach to the agreement or disagreement of other people's sentiments and judgments with our own is always exactly proportional to •how *un*sure we are about the propriety of our own sentiments and the accuracy of our own judgments.

A morally sensitive man may sometimes feel great uneasiness at the thought that he may have yielded too much to a certain passion—even an 'honourable passion', so to speak, such as his indignation at an injury that

he or a friend has sustained. He is anxiously afraid that while meaning only to act in a spirited and just way he may have been led by an unduly intense emotion to do a real injury to some other person who, though not innocent, may have been less guilty than he at first seemed to be. In this situation the opinion of other people comes to have the utmost importance for him. Their approval is the most healing ointment that can be poured into his uneasy mind; their disapproval the bitterest and most tormenting poison. When he is perfectly satisfied with every part of his own conduct, the judgment of other people is often of less importance to him.

There are some noble and beautiful **(1)** arts in which the degree of excellence can be determined only by a certain nicety of taste, the decisions of which seem always to be somewhat uncertain. There are **(2)** others in which success can be rigorously demonstrated or at least strongly argued for. Among the candidates for excellence in those different arts, a concern for public opinion is always much greater in **(1)** than in **(2)**.

[Smith elaborates this through a couple of book-pages. He puts poetry into class **(1)**, and reports cases in which fine poets have been crushed by public disapproval of their work. Mathematics is assigned to class **(2)**, because mathematical results are so certain that there's no room for wrong dissent.]

Sometimes the morals of those different classes of learned men are somewhat affected by this great difference in how they stand with relation to the public.

Because mathematicians and natural philosophers are independent of public opinion, they aren't much tempted to form themselves into factions and cliques, whether for the support of their own reputation or for lowering the reputation of their rivals. They are nearly all men of the most likeable simplicity of manners, who live in good harmony with one another, are the friends of one another's reputation, and don't enter into intrigues in order to secure the public applause. They are pleased when their works are approved of, but not much vexed or angry when they are neglected.

It's not always like that with poets, or with those who pride themselves on what is called fine writing. They are apt to divide themselves into a sort of literary factions, with each gang being. . . .the mortal enemy of the reputation of every other, and employing all the mean arts of intrigue and persuasion to get public opinion to side with the works of its own members and against those of its enemies and rivals. [Smith gives examples from

France and England, remarking that ‘the likeable Mr Addison didn’t think it unworthy of his gentle and modest character’ to take the lead in a conspiracy ‘to keep down the rising reputation of Mr Pope’. He contrasts this with the more selfless characters and conduct of ‘mathematicians and natural philosophers’.]

It is natural that our uncertainty concerning our own merit, and our concern to think favorably of it, should combine to make us •want to know the opinion of other people regarding it and •to be more than ordinarily elevated when that opinion is favourable (and more than ordinarily humiliated when it is unfavourable). [Smith goes on to say that we shouldn’t be willing to plot and scheme to get the favourable opinion or avoid the unfavourable one. Praise that one gets by unfair means is deprived of what mature and decent people regard as the main value of praise—namely its value as evidence that one is praiseworthy. He continues:]

The man who performs a praiseworthy action may also want the praise that is due to it—perhaps even more than is due to it. The two motivations —·to be praiseworthy and to be praised·—are in this case blended together. Even the man himself may not know how far his conduct was influenced by each of them, and it’s hardly ever possible for the rest of us to know. [What we’ll say about that, Smith says, will depend on how much we like the man in question and perhaps on what general view we have of human nature. He’ll return later to the topic of ‘splenetic’ views of human nature. Then:]

Very few men can be satisfied with their own private sense that their qualities and conduct are of the kinds they admire and think praiseworthy in other people, unless they actually receive praise for those qualities and that conduct. In this respect, though, men differ considerably from one another. Some men when they are perfectly satisfied in their own minds that they are praiseworthy seem not to care whether they are praised; others seem to care much less about praiseworthiness than about praise.

Unless a man avoids being actually blamed or reproached, he can’t be completely sure—he can’t even be *fairly* sure— that nothing in his conduct has been blameworthy. A wise man may often neglect praise [i.e. not give any thought to whether he is being praised], even when he has best deserved it; but in any seriously important matter he will try hard to act in such a way as to avoid not only •blameworthiness but also—as much as possible—every •plausible imputation of blame. . . . To show much concern about praise, even for praiseworthy actions, is usually a mark not of great wisdom but of some

degree of weakness; whereas in a concern to avoid the shadow of blame or reproach there may be no weakness but the most praiseworthy prudence. . . .

The all-wise Author of Nature has in this way taught man to respect the sentiments and judgments of his brethren—to be more or less pleased when they approve of his conduct and hurt when they disapprove of it. We could put this by saying that God has appointed man to be the immediate judge of mankind, this being one of the many respects in which he has created man after his own image. . . . Each man is taught by nature to acknowledge the power and jurisdiction that has thus been conferred on his fellow-men, to be more or less humbled and humiliated when he has drawn their censure, and to be more or less elated when he has obtained their applause.

But although men have in this way been appointed as the immediate judges of mankind, they are judges only in a lower court. Any sentence that they pass, ·i.e. any sentence of **the man without**·, can be appealed to a much higher court, namely to the tribunal of

> their own consciences, the supposed impartial and well-informed spectator, **the man within** the breast, the great judge and arbiter of their conduct.

The jurisdictions of those two tribunals are based on principles that are in reality different and distinct, though in some respects they are alike. . . . The jurisdiction of **the man without** is wholly based on the desire for actual praise, and aversion to actual blame. That of **the man within** is wholly based on the desire for praiseworthiness and aversion to blameworthiness, i.e.

> the desire to have the qualities and perform the actions that we love and admire in other people, and the fear of having the qualities and performing the actions that we hate and despise in other people.

If the man without should applaud us for actions we haven’t performed or motives that didn’t influence us, the man within can immediately humble the pride and elation that such groundless acclamations might otherwise cause, by telling us that when we accept them we make ourselves despicable because we know that we don’t deserve them. And on the other side, if the man without should reproach us for actions we haven’t performed or motives that didn’t influence us, the man within can immediately correct this false judgment and assure us that we are *not* proper objects of the censure that has so unjustly been laid on us. But. . . .the man

within seems sometimes to be astonished and confused by the noisy vigour of the man without. The violence and loudness with which blame is sometimes poured out on us seems to stupefy and numb our natural sense of praiseworthiness and blameworthiness; and the judgments of the man within, even if not absolutely altered or perverted, are so much *shaken* in the steadiness and firmness of their decision that they lose much of their natural effect of securing the tranquillity of the mind. We hardly dare find ourselves not guilty when all our brethren appear to condemn us loudly. The •supposed impartial spectator of our conduct seems fearful and hesitating when he gives his opinion in our favour, whereas all the •real spectators. . . .are unanimous and violent in giving their judgment against us. [Smith calls the man within a 'demigod', partly mortal and partly immortal and divine. He continues:] When the judgments of the man within are steadily and firmly directed by the sense of praiseworthiness and blameworthiness, he seems to act suitably to his divine birth; but when he allows himself to be astonished and confused by the judgments of ignorant and weak man, he reveals his connection with mortality and seems to act in line with the human rather than the divine part of his origin.

When this happens, the only effective consolation for a humbled and afflicted man lies in an appeal to a still higher tribunal, namely that of the all-seeing Judge of the world, whose eye can never be deceived and whose judgments can never be perverted. Our man was supplied by nature with the man within his breast, who was to act in this life as the great guardian of his innocence and of his tranquillity; but this man within has been disturbed and astonished ·by the clamour of public disapproval·, so that our man's mind has become weak and despondent; and now the only support he can find is in a firm confidence in the unerring rightness of the judgments of God's tribunal, before which his innocence will eventually be declared and his virtue rewarded. So our happiness in this life often depends on the humble hope and expectation of a life to come. This hope and expectation is deeply rooted in human nature, which needs

- •to support its lofty ideas of its own dignity,
- •to brighten the dreary prospect of continually approaching •death, and
- •to maintain its cheerfulness under all the heaviest calamities to which the disorders of this life sometimes expose it.

[Smith wrote 'continually approaching •mortality'—obviously a slip.] That there is a world to come, in which. . . .every man will be ranked with those who really are

his equals in moral and intellectual qualities. . . .is a doctrine that is in every respect so venerable, and so comfortable to the weakness of human nature and so flattering to its grandeur, that any virtuous man who has the misfortune to doubt it can't help earnestly wishing to believe it. It wouldn't have been exposed to the derision of the scoffers if it weren't for the fact that some of its most zealous supporters have described the distribution of rewards and punishments to be made in that world to come in a way that has too often been in direct opposition to all our moral sentiments.

A complaint that we have all heard from many a venerable but discontented old officer is that

> •an assiduous courtier is often more favoured than a faithful and active servant, that
>
> •attending and applauding are often shorter and surer roads to promotion than merit or service, and that
>
> •a 'campaign' ·of hanging around as a courtier at the court of· Versailles or St James's is often worth two ·military· campaigns in Germany or Flanders.

But what is considered as the greatest reproach even to the weakness of earthly sovereigns has been ascribed to divine perfection as an act of justice! The duties of devotion—the public and private worship of God—have been represented, even by able and virtuous men, as the only virtues that can either entitle us to reward or exempt us from punishment in the life to come. . . . The philosophically inclined Bishop Massillon, in a ceremony of blessing the flags of a military regiment of Catinat, said this to the officers:

> 'The most deplorable thing in your situation, gentlemen, is that in a hard and painful life in which your duties sometimes go beyond the rigour and severity of the most austere cloisters, your sufferings won't help you in the life to come or—in many cases—in this present life. Alas! the solitary monk in his cell, obliged to mortify the flesh [= 'to semi-starve and inflict physical pain on himself'] and to subject it to the spirit, is supported by the hope of an assured reward and by the secret support of the grace that softens the yoke of the Lord. But can you on your death-bed dare to represent to God the wearying daily hardships of your employment? can you dare to ask him for any reward?. . . . Alas! my brother, if one single day of those sufferings were consecrated to the Lord, it might have brought you eternal happiness. Offering up to

> God one single action that was painful to nature might have secured for you the inheritance of the saints. And you have done all this, and in vain, for *this* world!’

This comparison between •the futile mortifications of a monastery and •the ennobling hardships and hazards of war, this supposition that one day—one *hour*—employed in •the former should in God’s eyes have more merit than a whole life spent honourably in •the latter, is surely contrary to all our moral sentiments, contrary to all the principles by which nature has taught us to regulate our contempt or admiration. But this is the spirit that has

> •reserved the Heavenly regions for monks and friars, and for people whose conduct and conversation resembled those of monks and friars,

while at the same time

> •condemning to Hell all the heroes, all the statesmen and lawgivers, all the poets and philosophers of former ages; all those who have invented, improved, or excelled in the arts that contribute to the survival, convenience, or ornament of human life; all the great protectors, instructors, and benefactors of mankind; all those to whom our natural sense of praiseworthiness forces us to ascribe the highest merit and most exalted virtue.

It’s no wonder that such a strange application of this most respectworthy doctrine should sometimes have exposed it to contempt and derision—at least from people who didn’t themselves have any taste for or skill in the devout and contemplative virtues.

Chapter 3: The influences and authority of conscience

The approval of a man's own conscience is in some special cases barely enough to content him; the testimony of the supposed impartial spectator, that great inmate of the breast, can't always give him all the support he needs. Still, the influence and authority of this principle [see note here] is always very great, and it's only by consulting this inner judge that we can ever see our own character and conduct in its proper shape and dimensions, or make any proper comparison between our own interests and other people's.

We all know that to **the eye of the body** objects appear great or small not so much according to their real sizes as according to how far away they are. Well, the same is true for what may be called **the natural eye of the mind**, and we make up for the defects of both these 'eyes' in pretty much the same way. From where I am now sitting, an immense landscape of lawns, woods, and distant mountains seems to have barely the width of the little window that I write by. . . . My only way of soundly comparing those mountains etc. with the little objects in my study is to transport myself in imagination to a different viewpoint from which I can see both at nearly equal distances. . . . Habit and experience have taught me to do this so easily and smoothly that I am hardly aware of doing it at all; and it takes some knowledge of optics for a man to be thoroughly convinced of how small those distant objects would appear to the eye if the imagination didn't, knowing what their real sizes are, puff them up.

In the same way, to the selfish and basic passions of human nature the loss or gain of a very small interest of our own appears to be vastly more important than the greatest concern of someone else with whom we have no particular connection—arousing a more passionate joy or sorrow, a more ardent desire or aversion. As long as the other person's interests are surveyed from this viewpoint, they can never be put into the balance with our own, can never hold us back from doing whatever favours our interests, however ruinous to his. To make a proper comparison between his interests and ours, we must change our position. We must view both lots of interests not from our own place or from his, and not with our own eyes or with his, but from the place and with the eyes of a third person who has no particular connection with either of us, and who judges impartially between us. Here,

too, habit and experience have taught us to do this so easily and smoothly that we are hardly aware of doing it at all; and in this case too it takes some reflection—and even some philosophy—for a man to be convinced regarding how little interest he would take in his neighbour's greatest concerns. . . .if the sense of propriety and justice didn't correct the otherwise natural inequality of our sentiments.

Let us suppose that the great and populous empire of China was suddenly swallowed up by an earthquake, and let us consider how a humane man in Europe—one with no sort of connection with China—would be affected when he heard about this dreadful calamity. I imagine that he would first strongly express his sorrow for the misfortune of that unhappy people, and would make many melancholy reflections on the precariousness of human life, and the pointlessness of all the labours of man, which could thus be annihilated in a moment. He might also, if he were given to this sort of thing, think about how this disaster might affect the commerce of Europe and the trade and business of the world in general. [This was written 17 years before the appearance of Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*.] And when all this fine philosophy was over, and all these humane sentiments had been expressed, he would go about his business or his pleasure. . . .with the same ease and tranquillity as if no such accident had happened. The most trivial 'disaster' that could befall *him* would disturb him more. If he was due to lose his little finger tomorrow, he wouldn't sleep to-night; but he will snore contentedly over the ruin of a hundred million of his brethren, *provided he never saw them*; so the destruction of that immense multitude seems clearly to be of less concern to him than this paltry misfortune of his own. Well, then:

> Would a humane man be willing to avoid this paltry misfortune to himself—·this loss of a little finger·— by sacrificing the lives of a hundred million of his brethren, *provided he had never seen them*?

Human nature jumps back with horror at the thought. The world in its greatest depravity and corruption never produced a villain who could *think of* behaving in such a way. But what makes this difference? When our passive feelings are almost always so sordid and selfish, how does it happen that our active drives are often so generous and so noble? Given that we're always so much more deeply affected by whatever concerns ourselves than by whatever concerns other people, what is it that prompts generous people always (and mean people sometimes) to sacrifice their own interests to the greater interests of others? It's not •the soft power of humaneness, •that

feeble spark of benevolence that Nature has kindled in the human heart, that is thus capable of counteracting •the strongest impulses of self-love. What comes into play in these cases is a stronger power, a more forcible motive. It is *reason*, *principle*, *conscience*, *the inhabitant of the breast*, **the man within**, the great judge and arbiter of our conduct. It is *he* who, whenever we are about to act in some way that will affect the happiness of others, calls to us with a voice capable of astonishing the most presumptuous of our passions! What he tells us is that

> •we are only one of the multitude, in no respect better than any other, and that
>
> •when we prefer ourselves so shamefully and so blindly to others we become proper objects of resentment, abhorrence, and cursing.

It's only from *him* that we learn the real littleness of ourselves and of whatever relates to ourselves; and the natural misrepresentations of self-love can be corrected only by the eye of this impartial spectator. It is *he* who shows us

> •the propriety of generosity and the ugliness of injustice,
>
> •the propriety of forgoing our own greatest interests in favour of the still greater interests of others, and
>
> •the ugliness of doing the smallest injury to someone else in order to get the greatest benefit to ourselves.

It is not the love of our neighbour, the love of mankind, that often prompts us to practice those divine virtues. What usually comes into play on such occasions is a stronger love, a more powerful affection—the love of what is honourable and noble, of the grandeur and dignity and superiority of our own characters.

When the happiness or misery of others depends in any way on how we behave, we dare not follow self-love's hint and prefer the interest of one to that of many. ·If we start to move in that direction·, the man within immediately tells us •that we are valuing ourselves too much and other people too little, and •that by doing this we make ourselves the proper object of other people's contempt and indignation. And this sentiment isn't confined to men of extraordinary magnanimity and virtue. It is deeply impressed on every reasonably good soldier, who feels that his companions would despise him if they thought him capable of shrinking from danger, or of hesitating to risk—or even to throw away—his life when the good of the service required it.

If I could bring myself a large benefit by doing you a small harm, is it all right for me to prefer myself over you to that extent? No! The poor man mustn't defraud or steal from the rich, even if the benefit the acquisition would bring him would be much larger than the harm it would do to the rich man. ·If a poor man starts to plan such a theft·, the man within immediately tells him that he is no better than his neighbour, and that by this unjust preference ·for himself over the rich man· he makes himself a proper object •of the contempt and indignation of mankind and •of the punishment that their contempt and indignation will naturally dispose them to inflict. Punishment? Yes!—for having violated one of the sacred rules that must be mainly observed if human society is to continue in security and peace. Any ordinarily honest man will dread •the inward disgrace of such an action, stamping an indelible stain on his own mind, more than •the greatest external calamity that could possibly befall him. . . .

When the happiness or misery of others in no way depends on our conduct, when our interests are altogether separated and detached from theirs so that there's neither connection nor competition between them, we don't always think it so necessary to restrain •our natural and perhaps improper anxiety about our own affairs, or •our natural and perhaps equally improper indifference about those of other men. The most ordinary education teaches us to act on all important occasions with some sort of impartiality between ourselves and others, and even the ordinary commerce of the world is capable of adjusting our **active drives** so that they conform to some degree of propriety. But a highly developed and refined education has been said to be needed to correct the inequalities of our **passive feelings**. For this purpose, it has been claimed, we must resort to philosophical investigations that are extremely severe and extremely deep.

Two different sets of philosophers have tried to teach us this hardest of all the lessons of morality.

> **(1)** Some have worked to increase our sensitivity to the interests of others; they want us to feel for others as we naturally feel for ourselves.
>
> **(2)** The other group have worked to lessen our awareness of our own interests; they want us to feel for ourselves as we naturally feel for others.

It may be that both have carried their doctrines a good distance beyond the just standard of nature and propriety.

(1) The first group are the whining and melancholy moralists who are perpetually reproaching us for being happy when so many of our brethren are in misery, who regard as impious the natural joy of prosperity that doesn't think of the many wretches who are labouring under all sorts of calamities—poverty, disease, horrors of death, the insults and oppression of their enemies. In their opinion,

> commiseration for miseries that we never saw and never heard of, but that we can be sure are at all times infesting large numbers of our fellow-creatures, ought to damp the pleasures of people who are fortunate, and to make a certain melancholy dejection habitual to all men.

·There are three things wrong with this·. •This extreme sympathy with misfortunes that we know nothing about seems altogether absurd and unreasonable. Taking the world as a whole, for each man who suffers pain or misery there are twenty in prosperity and joy, or at least in tolerable circumstances. Surely no reason can be given why we should weep with the one rather than rejoice with the twenty. •Also, this artificial commiseration is not only absurd but seems altogether impossible for us. Those who act as though this was their frame of mind usually have nothing but a certain artificial and sentimental sadness that makes their faces and conversation irrelevantly dismal and disagreeable without reaching their heart. •And, lastly, even if this disposition of mind could be achieved it would be perfectly useless, serving merely to make miserable the person who had it. . . . All men, however distant, are no doubt entitled to our good wishes, and our good wishes we naturally give them. But if they should be unfortunate, it's no part of our duty to give ourselves any anxiety about that. . . .

(2) The moralists who try to correct the natural inequality of our passive feelings by making us less sensitive to what specially concerns ourselves include all the ancient sects of philosophers and especially the ancient Stoics. According to them a man ought to regard himself not as something separated and detached but as a citizen of the world, a member of the vast commonwealth of nature. He ought at all times to be willing that his own little interests should be sacrificed to the interests of this great community. Whatever concerns him personally ought to affect him no more than whatever concerns any other equally important part of this immense system —·e.g. any other *one* person·. We should view ourselves not in the light that

our own selfish passions are apt to throw, but in the light in which any other citizen of the world would view us. . . .

[Preparing the ground for discussing this, Smith distinguishes private misfortunes into **(a)** ones that affect us by affecting our near and dear—parents, offspring, and so on; and **(b)** ones that affect us immediately and directly. There is a great variety of possible misfortunes of either kind—pain, sickness, approaching death, poverty, disgrace, and so on.]

(a) In misfortunes of the first kind our emotions may go far beyond what exact propriety will accept, but they may likewise fall short of that—and they often do. A man who felt no more for the death or distress of his own father or son than for the death or distress of someone else's father or son would strike us as being neither a good son nor a good father. Such unnatural indifference, far from arousing our applause, would draw our highest disapproval. But these domestic affections ·fall into two groups for our present purposes·: we are apt to have some of them more strongly than is proper, and to have others less strongly than we should. Nature in its wisdom has, in most and perhaps all men, installed a much stronger drive towards •parental tenderness than towards •filial respect. The continuance and propagation of the species depend entirely on •the former, and not at all on •the latter. The existence and survival of the child usually depends altogether on the care of the parents, whereas parents' existence and survival seldom depend on the care of the child. That's why Nature has made the former affection so strong that it generally requires not to be aroused but to be moderated. . . . But moralists do urge us to an affectionate attention to our parents, and to make a proper return to them in their old age for the kindness that they showed us in our youth. In the Ten Commandments we are commanded to honour our fathers and mothers; and nothing is said about our love for our children, ·because· Nature had sufficiently prepared us for the performance of this latter duty. Men are seldom accused of pretending to be fonder of their children than they really are, but they have sometimes been suspected of putting too much *show* into their displays of piety towards their parents. The ostentatious sorrow of widows has, for a like reason, been suspected of insincerity. We would respect even excessive affections [see note here] of that kind if we believed them to be sincere; and even if we didn't perfectly approve, we wouldn't severely condemn either. . . .

Although the excess of affections of this sort appears to be blameworthy, it never appears to be odious. We blame a parent's excessive fondness and concern as something that may eventually be harmful to the child, and is in the meantime excessively inconvenient to the parent; but we easily pardon it and never regard it with hatred and detestation. But when a parent has •too little of this parental affection of which most parents have •too much, that always strikes us as especially odious. The man who seems to feel nothing for his own children, treating them on all occasions with undeserved severity and harshness, seems the most detestable of all brutes. Our sense of propriety, so far from requiring us to eradicate altogether the special sensitivity that we naturally have for the misfortunes of our near and dear, is always much more offended by someone's having too little of that sensitivity than it ever is by someone's having too much. When it comes to feelings and attitudes towards one's parents, one's offspring, and the like, the apathy recommended by the Stoics is never agreeable, and all the metaphysical trick-arguments by which it is supported can seldom achieve anything except to work on a coxcomb [here = 'moral idiot'], making his hard unfeelingness ten times worse than it would have been if he had been left to himself. . . .

•That moderated sensitivity to the misfortunes of others, which doesn't disqualify us for the performance of any duty; •the melancholy and affectionate remembrance of our departed friends; what ·the poet· Gray calls •'the pang, to secret sorrow dear', are by no means unpleasant sensations. Though they outwardly wear the features of pain and grief, they are all inwardly stamped with the ennobling characters of virtue and self-approval.

(b) When it comes to the misfortunes that affect us immediately and directly—in our body, our fortune, or our reputation—the sense of propriety is much more apt to be offended by someone's having too much sensitivity to these than by someone's having too little of it. There are few cases where we can come too near to the apathy and indifference recommended by the Stoics.

[Smith now offers a couple of pages of remarks about how our sympathy with others' misfortunes varies in intensity, in tone, and in resultant behaviour, depending on whether the misfortune in question is bodily pain, financial loss, or loss of reputation. This material is book-ended between

two occurrences of the remark that although such sympathy is a kind of sadness there is also something agreeable about it. Then:]

If we examine the different shades and gradations of weakness and self-control that we meet with in everyday life, we'll see that this control of our passive feelings must be acquired not from •the abstruse syllogisms of a quibbling dialectic but from •the great discipline that Nature has established as a means for acquiring this and every other virtue, namely a regard for the sentiments of the real or supposed spectator of our conduct.

A very young child has no self-control. Whether it is suffering fear or grief or anger, it always does its best by the violence of its outcries to alarm the attention of its nurse or its parents. While it remains under the custody of such •partial protectors [= 'protectors who are biased in its favour'], its anger is the first and perhaps the only passion it is taught to moderate. In defence of their own peace of mind, the protectors are often obliged to use noise and threatening of their own to frighten the child into a good mood, and the passion that incites it to attack is restrained by the passion that teaches it to look to its own safety. When it is old enough to go to school or to mix with its equals, the child soon finds that *they* have no such indulgent •partiality. It naturally wants to gain their favour and to avoid their hatred or contempt—indeed, regard for its own safety teaches it to do so—and it soon finds that the only way to do that is to moderate not only its anger but all its other passions, toning them down to a level that the child's playmates and companions are likely to be pleased with. It thus enters into the great school of self-control, studies to be more and more master of itself, and begins to discipline its own feelings—a task that few people bring to completion in the course of a lifetime!

[Smith now presents a long account of how someone who is suffering conducts himself in relation to friends and acquaintances, depending on whether the sufferer is **(i)** 'the weakest man', **(ii)** 'a man of a little more firmness', or **(iii)** a 'man of real constancy and firmness'. The differences are what you might expect. Notable in the account of **(i)** is Smith's remark that this weak man tries to get more sympathy from others by upping his expressions of pain and sorrow, behaving 'like a child that has not yet gone to school'. The man in **(ii)** does better: he stays calm, feels the approval that his friends and acquaintances have for his restraint, and is thus encouraged to keep it up, silently 'applauding himself'. There is much more about this,

but it doesn’t add significantly to the philosophical content. Then there is the man in **(iii)**:]

[This paragraph down to * is almost exactly as Smith wrote it.] The man of real constancy and firmness, the wise and just man who has been thoroughly bred in the great school of self-control, in the bustle and business of the world, exposed perhaps to the violence and injustice of faction and to the hardships and hazards of war, maintains this control of his passive feelings on all occasions; and whether in solitude or in society he wears nearly the same countenance and is affected in nearly the same manner. In success and in disappointment, in prosperity and in adversity, before friends and before enemies, he has often had to maintain this manliness. He has never dared to forget for one moment the judgment that the impartial spectator would pass on his sentiments and conduct. He has never dared to allow •the man within the breast to be absent from his attention for one moment. He has always been accustomed to look at anything relating to him with the eyes of •this great inmate. This habit has become perfectly familiar to him.* What he has constantly done and indeed constantly needed to do is to model—or try to model—not only what he does and how he does it, but even his inward sentiments and feelings on those of •this awe-inspiring and respectworthy judge. [Here and in a few other places, the phrase ‘what he does and how he does it’ replaces Smith’s ‘his outward conduct and behaviour’. It is a guess about what he meant.] He doesn’t merely *portray* the sentiments of the impartial spectator—he really *adopts* them. He almost identifies himself with—he almost *becomes*—that impartial spectator, and almost never feels anything that this great judge of his conduct doesn’t direct him to feel.

[Then a paragraph in which Smith says that a man’s approval of himself for doing A is proportional to how hard it was for him to do A. He continues:] A man who has had a leg shot off and who in the next moment speaks and acts with his usual coolness and tranquillity shows a high degree of self-control, so he naturally feels a high degree of self-approval. With most men to whom this happened, their own natural view of their misfortune would force itself on them with such a vivacity and strength of colouring that it would entirely wipe out all thought of any other way of looking at it. They wouldn’t feel anything—couldn’t attend to anything—except their own pain and fear; they would entirely disregard not only the judgment of the ideal man within the breast but also that of any real spectators who happened to be present.

Given that a man behaves well in face of misfortune, *how* well he counts as behaving depends on how great the misfortune is; and Nature's reward for good behaviour under misfortune is exactly proportioned to how good the behaviour is. The more self-control that is needed for us to conquer our natural sensibility—·which includes our natural inclination to whine and complain·—the greater are our pleasure and pride in achieving the conquest. And this pleasure and pride ·over having won a moral victory· are so great that no-one who has *them* can be altogether unhappy. Misery and wretchedness can't enter the breast in which complete self-satisfaction dwells. The Stoics say that a wise man who has his leg shot off will be as happy as he would have been if this hadn't happened; that may be going too far, but we do have to agree that the man's complete enjoyment of his own self-applause will greatly alleviate •his sense of his own sufferings, even if it doesn't altogether extinguish •it.

In such paroxysms of distress, ·even· the wisest and firmest man presumably won't be able to stay calm without a considerable and even a painful exertion. He is hard-pressed by his natural feeling of his own distress, **(1)** his natural view of his own situation, and will need a great effort to fix his attention on **(2)** the view that the impartial spectator has of his situation. Both views present themselves to him at the same time. His sense of honour, his regard for his own dignity, directs him to fix his whole attention on **(2)**, while his natural—untaught and undisciplined—feelings are continually calling it away to **(1)**. On this occasion he doesn't perfectly identify himself with the ideal man within the breast; he doesn't himself *become* the impartial spectator of his own conduct. The two views both exist in his mind separate and distinct from one another, directing his behaviour in different directions. When he follows **(2)** the view that honour and dignity point out to him, •Nature gives him some reward—the enjoyment of his own complete self-approval and of the applause of every honest and impartial spectator. But this isn't enough to compensate completely for the real sufferings that he undergoes through Nature's unalterable laws. (And it's good that it doesn't! If it did *completely* make up for them, his self-interest would give him no motive for avoiding such events as the loss of a leg, which would lessen his utility both to himself and to society. . . .) So he does suffer. In the agony of the paroxysm he maintains the manhood of his countenance and the steadiness of his judgment, but it requires his utmost and most fatiguing exertions to do so.

By the constitution of human nature, however, agony can never be permanent; and if our man survives the paroxysm he soon arrives at an easy enjoyment of his ordinary tranquillity. There's no doubt that a man with a wooden leg is burdened with a considerable inconvenience, and foresees that he'll have this for the rest of his life. But he soon comes to view it in exactly the way every impartial spectator views it—as an inconvenience under which he can enjoy all the ordinary pleasures both of solitude and of society. He soon identifies himself with the ideal man within the breast, becoming himself the impartial spectator of his own situation. He no longer weeps, laments, or grieves over it as a weak man might do in the beginning. The view of the impartial spectator becomes so perfectly habitual to him that without putting any effort or exertion into this he never thinks of surveying his misfortune in any other way.

The never-failing certainty with which all men eventually adjust themselves to fit whatever becomes their permanent situation may lead us to think that the Stoics were nearly right, to this extent:

> Between one permanent situation and another there is, with regard to real happiness, no essential difference. Or if there is, it's a difference that suffices •to support a preference for some of them, but only a simple preference, not an earnest or anxious desire; and •to support a simple rejection of others, but not an earnest or anxious aversion.

Happiness consists in tranquillity and enjoyment. Without tranquillity there can be no enjoyment; and where there is perfect tranquillity almost anything can be amusing. But in every permanent situation where there's no expectation of change, the mind of every man returns, sooner or later, to its natural and usual state of tranquillity. In prosperity it eventually falls back to that state; in adversity it eventually rises up to it. . . .

The great source of the misery and the disorders of human life seems to be men's over-rating of the difference between one permanent situation and another—the over-rating

> —by avarice of the difference between poverty and riches,
>
> —by ambition of the difference between a private and a public station,
>
> —by vain-glory of the difference between obscurity and extensive reputation.

Someone under the influence of any of those extravagant passions is not only miserable in his actual situation but is often disposed to disturb the peace of society in order to arrive at whatever it is that he so foolishly

admires. [Smith now embarks on a rather preachy page and a half of reasons why behaviour in the service of any one of those ambitions is almost certain to be pointless—too much chance of failure, and too little chance of real satisfaction if one does succeed. Then:]

It may seem •strange but I think it is •true that in the misfortunes that can be somewhat remedied most men don't recover their natural and usual tranquillity as readily as they do in misfortunes that clearly can't be remedied. With misfortunes of the latter kind, ·i.e. irremediable ones·, the wise man's sentiments and behaviour don't differ noticeably from those of the weak man except in what may be called 'the paroxysm', the first attack. In the end, Time, the great and universal comforter, gradually soothes the weak man till he reaches the degree of tranquillity that the wise man, having a concern for his own dignity and manhood, assumes at the beginning. The case of the man with the wooden leg is an obvious example of this. In the irreparable misfortunes occasioned by the death of children, or of friends and relatives, even a wise man may for a while permit himself some moderate degree sorrow. An affectionate but weak woman is often on such occasions almost perfectly distracted; but Time eventually calms even her down. . . .

Our sensitivity to the feelings of others, far from being inconsistent with •the manliness of self-control, is the very source of •it. The very same drive or instinct that •prompts us to compassion for our neighbour's sorrow in his the misfortune also •prompts us in our own misfortune to restrain the abject and miserable lamentations of our own sorrow. The same drive or instinct that •prompts us to rejoice in our neighbour's joy over his prosperity and success also •prompts us to restrain the rowdy light-heartedness of our own joy. In both cases, the propriety of our own sentiments and feelings seems to be exactly in proportion to the liveliness and force with which we enter into and come to have his sentiments and feelings.

[Smith now embarks on two not *very* interesting book-pages presenting two theses about the relation between

> **(1)** the 'gentle virtue' of sensitivity to the feelings of others in their misfortunes, and
>
> **(2)** the 'great and awe-inspiring virtue' of self-control and moderation in the expression of one's own feelings in one's own misfortunes.

[He *states* the theses as though they held also for the versions of **(1)** and **(2)** that concern joy in good fortune; but his reason for the second of them is confined to **(1)** and **(2)** as stated above.] One

thesis is that ‘the person best fitted by nature for acquiring **(1)** is also best fitted for acquiring **(2)**’. The second thesis is that we don’t often encounter anyone who has both of these virtues, for a reason that Smith gives. Each of those virtues, he says, requires not merely •natural fitness but also practice, and a life in which a man has plenty of opportunity to exercise **(2)** is an arduous rough-and-tumble affair, full of hardships and reverses, in which **(1)** is apt to be shouldered aside. He continues:] Hardships, dangers, injuries, misfortunes are the only masters under whom we can learn the exercise of **(2)** this virtue. But these are all masters to whom no-one willingly puts himself to school! [Smith develops this topic at some length, and then switches to a new train of thought:]

In solitude we’re apt to feel *too strongly* anything relating to ourselves; we are apt to

- •over-rate the help we have given to others, to
- •over-rate injuries we have suffered, to
- •be too much elated by our own good fortune, and to
- •be too much dejected by our own bad fortune.

The conversation of a friend brings us into a better frame of mind, and the conversation of a stranger does this even more. The man within the breast, the abstract and ideal spectator of our sentiments and conduct, often needs to be awakened and reminded of his duty by the presence of a real spectator; and the spectator from whom we can expect the least sympathy and indulgence is likely to be the one who can give us the most complete lesson in self-control.

Are you in adversity? Don’t mourn in the darkness of solitude, don’t regulate your sorrow according to the indulgent sympathy of your intimate friends; as soon as you can, get out into the day-light of the world and of society. Live with strangers who don’t know or don’t care about your misfortune. . . .

Are you in prosperity? Don’t confine the enjoyment of your good fortune to your own household, to the company of your own friends and (perhaps) of your flatterers, of the company of people who hope to mend their fortunes by building on yours; spend time with people who are independent of you, and value you only for your character and conduct rather than for your fortune. . . .

The propriety of our moral sentiments is never so apt to be corrupted as when an indulgent and partial spectator is right here while the nearest

unbiased and impartial one is a long way off.

The only unbiased and impartial spectators of the conduct of independent nations towards one another are neutral nations. But they are so far away as to be almost out of sight. When two nations are at odds with one another, a citizen in either of them pays little regard to the sentiments that foreign nations may have regarding his conduct. All he wants is to have the approval of his fellow-citizens; and as they are all driven by the same hostile passions that drive him, his best way of pleasing them is to enrage and offend their enemies. So the partial spectator is *here*, the impartial one *far away*. That is why in war and negotiation the laws of justice are seldom observed: truth and fair dealing are almost totally disregarded; treaties are violated; and if a violation brings some advantage, it brings almost no dishonour on the violator. . . . In war, not only are the so-called ‘laws of nations’ often violated. . . .but most of those ‘laws’ themselves are laid down with little regard for the plainest and most obvious rules of justice. One of the plainest and most obvious rules of justice is this:

> Innocent people should not suffer or be punished because they are somehow connected with or dependent on the guilty (a connection that they may be unable to avoid).

Yet in the most unjust war it is often only the sovereign or the rulers who are guilty, their subjects being perfectly innocent. Whenever it suits the convenience of a public enemy, however, the goods of the peaceable citizens are seized, their lands laid waste, their houses burnt, and they themselves, if they dare to resist, are murdered or led into captivity—all this in perfect conformity with the ‘laws of nations’!

[Smith goes on to say that the moral level of conflicts between ‘hostile factions’ within a nation is even lower than the moral level of wars between nations. No-one doubts that in wars between nations one *ought to* ‘keep faith’ with the enemy nation, i.e. keep promises given to it, keep contracts made with it, and so on. Whereas when factions are at war people seriously discuss whether faith ought to be kept with rebels, or with heretics. Smith remarks acidly that ‘rebels and heretics are unlucky people who, when things have reached a certain level of violence, have the misfortune to belong to the weaker party’. He continues:] In a nation distracted by faction there are always a few, but *only* a few, who preserve their judgment untainted by the general contagion. Such people have no influence on the course of events, because the parties to the conflict won’t listen to them. . . .

All such people are held in contempt and derision, often in detestation, by the furious zealots of both parties. A true party-man hates and despises fair-mindedness, and the fact is that no •vice could disqualify him for the trade of a party-man as effectually as that single •virtue, fairmindedness, would. Thus, the real, revered, and impartial spectator is never further off than amidst the violence and rage of contending parties. To *them*, it may be said, such a spectator hardly exists anywhere in the universe. Even to the great Judge of the universe they attribute all their own prejudices, and often view that Divine Being as driven by all their own vindictive and implacable passions. Of all the corrupters of moral sentiments, faction and fanaticism have always been by far the greatest.

[In a final pair of paragraphs Smith returns to the topic of self-control in adversity, not adding much to what he has already said.]

Chapter 4: The nature of self-deceit, and the origin and use of general rules

To pervert our own judgments about the propriety of our own conduct, it isn't always necessary for the real impartial spectator to be at a great distance. Even when he is present, the violence and injustice of our own selfish passions are sometimes sufficient to induce the man within the breast to make a report very different from what the facts of the case would authorise.

When do we examine our own conduct and try to see it in the light in which the impartial spectator would see it? **(1)** When we are about to act. **(2)** After we have acted. Our views are apt to be biased in both cases; but they are apt to be most biased when it is of most importance that they should be balanced and fair.

(1) When we are about to act, the eagerness of passion seldom allows us to consider what we are doing with the fair-mindedness of an unbiased person. The violent emotions that are agitating us then serve to discolour our views of things, even when we are *trying* to place ourselves in the situation of the impartial spectator and to see objects that concern us in the light in which they will naturally appear to him. The fury of our own passions constantly calls us back to our own viewpoint, from which everything appears magnified and misrepresented by self-love. As for how those objects would appear to someone else, the view that *he* would have of them, we get only flickering little glimpses that vanish in a moment—and aren't entirely right even while they last! We can't even for that moment rid ourselves of all the heat and eagerness with which our particular situation inspires us, or consider what we are about to do with the complete impartiality of a fair-minded judge. As Malebranche says, •the passions all seem reasonable and proportioned to their objects for as long as we continue to feel •them.

(2) When the action is over and the passions that prompted it have subsided, we can enter more coolly into the sentiments of •the unbiased spectator. What concerned us before ·we acted· now matters to us almost as little as it always did to •him, and we can now examine our own conduct as honestly and impartially as he does. The man of today is no longer agitated by the same passions that distracted the man of yesterday; and when the

•paroxysm of emotion is thoroughly over, we can identify ourselves with the ideal man within the breast, and look at our own •conduct with the severe eyes of the most impartial spectator. (This echoes what I said earlier [here] about how, when the •paroxysm of distress is over, we can look objectively and impartially at our own •situation.) But now that the action is over, our judgments are often nothing like as important as they were before; they can often produce nothing but pointless regret and useless repentance, without always securing us from similar errors in future. And even in this after-the-action situation, our judgments on our own conduct are seldom entirely fair-minded. ·That is because· our opinion of our own •character depends entirely on our judgments regarding our past •conduct. It is so disagreeable to think ill of ourselves that we often deliberately avert our eyes from facts that might make that judgment unfavourable. He is a bold surgeon (they say) whose hand doesn't tremble when he operates on himself; and it's an equally bold person who doesn't hesitate to pull off the veil of self-delusion that hides from his view the ugly parts of his own conduct [see note on 'ugly' here]. Rather than having such a disagreeable view of our own behaviour, we too often—foolishly and weakly—try to revive the unjust passions that had misled us; we work to awaken our old hatreds and stir up again our almost forgotten resentments; we even *act* on them again, persevering in injustice merely because we were once unjust and are ashamed and afraid to see that we were so.

That is how biased men's views are regarding the propriety of their own conduct, both at the time of action and after it, and how hard it is for them to see it in the light in which any impartial spectator would see it. ·The most basic question of moral epistemology comes into play here·. Some theorists hold that men judge their own conduct through a special faculty, a 'moral sense', a special power of ·moral· perception that picks out the beauty or ugliness of passions and affections. But if that were right, men's own passions would be more immediately exposed to the view of •this faculty, and •it would judge them with more accuracy than it judged the passions of other men, which •it could view only from a distance.

This self-deceit, this fatal weakness of mankind, is the source of half the disorders of human life. If we saw ourselves in the light in which others see us, or in which they would see us if they knew all the facts, we couldn't endure the sight unless we immediately set about reforming ourselves.

But Nature hasn't left us with absolutely no remedy for this important weakness—she hasn't abandoned us entirely to the delusions of self-love. Our continual observations of the conduct of others lead us unconsciously to construct general rules about what is fit and proper to do or to avoid. Some of their actions shock all our natural sentiments. We hear everyone around expressing the same detestation of them, which confirms and even increases our natural sense of the actions' ugliness. We're satisfied that we are viewing them in the proper light when we see other people viewing them in the same light. We resolve never to be guilty of such actions, and never to do *anything* that would in this way make us objects of universal disapproval. In this natural way we lay down for ourselves a general *rule* that all such actions are to be avoided because they tend to make us odious, contemptible, or punishable—i.e. objects of the sentiments for which we have the greatest dread and aversion. On the other side, other actions call forth our approval, and we hear everyone around us express the same favourable opinion about them. Everyone is eager to honour and reward them; they arouse all the sentiments for which we have by nature the strongest desire—the love, the gratitude, the admiration of mankind. We come to want to act in those ways, and thus naturally lay down for ourselves a rule of another kind, that we should always be on the watch for opportunities to act in this way.

That is how the general rules of morality are formed. They are ultimately based on experience of what our moral faculties—our natural sense of merit and propriety—approve or disapprove of in particular instances. What happens is **not** this:

> **(a)** When we approve (or condemn) particular actions, that is always because on examination those actions appear to be agreeable to (or inconsistent with) a certain general rule.

The real order is the opposite of that, namely:

> (b) We find from experience that all actions of a certain kind. . . .are approved of or disapproved of, and on that basis we form a general rule against all such actions.

·As an aid to seeing how wrong and unreal **(a)** is, as a general account of how our particular moral judgments relate to our general moral rules, suppose the following·:

> You see an inhuman murder, committed out of greed, envy, or misplaced resentment. The victim is someone who had loved and

> trusted the murderer. You saw the last agonies of the dying person, and heard him with his expiring breath complain more of the treachery and ingratitude of his false friend than of the violence that had been done to him.

To arrive at a moral judgment on this horrible action you won't apply to it a general rule prohibiting the killing of innocent people! Obviously you would arrive instantaneously at your detestation of this crime, before you get to any thought about a general rule that might apply to it. If you do eventually form such a general rule, it will be based on the detestation that you felt unstoppably arising in your own breast at the thought of this action and any other of the same kind.

[Smith now offers two paragraphs repeating and faintly illustrating what he has just said. Then:]

Once these general rules have been formed, once they are universally accepted and established by the concurring sentiments of mankind, we often appeal to them as to standards of judgment when we are debating the degree of praise or blame that is appropriate for certain actions of a complicated and dubious nature. *On these occasions* the rules are commonly cited as the ultimate foundations of what is just and unjust in human conduct; and this fact seems to have misled several eminent authors into constructing systems that seem to presuppose that mankind's *basic* moral judgments were formed in the way a law-court reaches its decisions, namely by •first considering the general rule and •then deciding whether the particular action in question comes within its scope.

When someone is wondering what it is fit and proper for him to do at a particular moment, his self-love may give him a wrong answer; and in this situation he can be greatly helped by general rules of conduct that have been fixed in his mind by habitual reflection. A man who is furiously resentful of what someone has done to him might, if he listened to the dictates of his resentment, regard his enemy's death as a small compensation for •the wrong he thinks has been done to him—though it may in fact be merely •a slight provocation. But what he has seen of the conduct of others has taught him how horrible all such bloody revenges appear ·to people in general·. Unless he has been brought up in a *very* strange way, he has imposed on himself an inviolable rule telling him *never* to act in that way. This rule preserves its authority over him, making him incapable of being guilty of such a violent act. If this had been the first time

he ever considered such an action, the fury of his resentment might have led him to think that killing his enemy was quite just and proper, something that every impartial spectator would approve of. But his reverence for the rule that past experience has impressed on him holds back the onward rush of his passion. . . . If he does allow himself to be carried by his passion to the point where he will violate this rule, he still can't entirely throw off the awe and respect with which he has been accustomed to regard it. At the very time of acting, at the moment when passion reaches it highest pitch, he hesitates and trembles at the thought of what he is about to do; he is secretly aware that he is breaking a rule which in all his cool hours he has resolved never to break, which he has never seen broken by others without the highest disapproval ·from himself and from people in general·, and the breaking of which will (he expects) soon render him an object of the same disagreeable sentiments. Before he can make the last fatal decision, he is tormented with all the agonies of doubt and uncertainty, terrified at the thought of violating such a sacred rule, and at the same time urged to violate it by the fury of his desires. He keeps wavering. Sometimes he resolves to keep to his principle, and not give way to a passion that could spoil the rest of his life with the horrors of shame and repentance; and then a momentary calm takes possession of his breast. . . . But immediately the passion arises anew and with fresh fury drives him on to perform the action that he had a moment ago resolved to abstain from. Wearied and distracted by this continual indecision, he finally takes the last fatal and irrecoverable step of killing his enemy, doing this from a sort of despair; but doing it with the kind of terror and bewilderment experienced by someone who, flying from an enemy, throws himself over a precipice—thus making his destruction more certain than it would be if he had only his enemy to reckon with. Such are his sentiments even at the time of acting;. . . .and then later, when his passion has been gratified and has calmed down, he begins to see what he has done in the light in which others are apt to see it; and he feels the stings of remorse and repentance beginning to agitate and torment him.

Chapter 5: The influence and authority of the general rules of morality, and why they are rightly regarded as the laws of the Deity

A person's regard for those general rules of conduct is his *sense of duty*, a driver [Smith writes 'principle'; see note here] of the greatest importance in human life, and the *only* driver that most people have to direct their actions. Many men behave decently, and don't do anything very wrong all through their lives, yet base their conduct only on a regard for what they see to be the established rules of behaviour. (That means that when we approve of their conduct on the grounds that 'The sentiment that led him to act was a proper one', we're relying on sentiments that such a person never has!) Here is an example:

> A man has received great benefits from someone else, but because of the natural coldness of his temperament he feels only a small degree of the sentiment of gratitude. But he has been virtuously educated, so that he'll often have been made to notice how odious ungrateful actions appear and how likeable grateful ones. So, although his heart is not warmed with any grateful affection, he will make an effort to act as if it were, and will try to pay to his benefactor all the regards and attentions that the liveliest gratitude could suggest.

[Smith details some of the actions this might involves. Then:] He can do all this without any hypocrisy or blameworthy deceit, without any selfish intention of obtaining new favours, and without any wish to impose on his benefactor or on the public. It may be that these grateful-seeming actions of his arise purely from •his reverence for the established rule of duty, •his serious and earnest wish to behave strictly in accordance with the law of gratitude. And again:

> A wife doesn't always feel •the tender regard for her husband that is suitable to their married state. But she has been virtuously educated, and will try to act as if she did feel •it—to be careful, dutiful, faithful, and sincere, and not to fall short in any of the attentions that the sentiment of conjugal affection would (if she had it) prompt her to perform.

Neither of these people—the friend and the wife—is the best of his or her kind. Both of them have the most serious and earnest desire to fulfill every

part of their duty, but they will fail in many subtle details of conduct, miss many opportunities of obliging, which they wouldn't have overlooked if they had had the sentiment that is proper to their situation. Still, without being the very best of their kinds they are perhaps second-best; and if respect for the general rules of conduct has been strongly impressed on them, neither of them will fail in any essential part of their duty. Only people with perfect characters can adjust their sentiments and behaviour so that they stay *exactly* in tune with the smallest differences in their situation, acting on all occasions with the most delicate and accurate propriety. The coarse clay of which most of us are made can't be brought to such perfection. But almost any man can, by discipline, education, and example, be so impressed with a respect for general rules that he will act on almost every occasion with tolerable decency, and through the whole of his life avoid doing anything considerably blameworthy.

Without •this sacred regard for general rules, no-one's conduct can be much depended on. •It is what constitutes the most essential difference between a man of principle and honour and a worthless fellow. The man of principle keeps steadily and resolutely to his maxims on all occasions, preserving through the whole of his life one even tenor of conduct. [Smith uses 'tenor' several times, in a sense that the word still has though it isn't now much employed. The 'tenor' of someone's conduct is its general *style* or *feel* or *tone* or *over-all shape*.] The worthless fellow acts variously and accidentally, depending on whether mood, inclination, or self-interest happens to be uppermost. Indeed, men are subject to such variations of mood that without this respect for general rules a man who in all his cool hours was delicately sensitive to the propriety of conduct might often be led to act absurdly on the most trivial occasions, ones in which it was hardly possible to think of any serious motive he could have for behaving in this manner. Your friend visits you when you happen to be in a mood that makes it disagreeable to receive him; in your present mood his civility is apt to appear an impertinent intrusion; and if you gave way to that way of viewing things you would behave toward him with coldness and lack of interest. What makes you incapable of such rudeness is just your respect for the general rules of civility and hospitality, which prohibit it. . . . Now consider: if without regard to these general rules

> even the duties of politeness, which are so easily observed and which one can hardly have any serious motive to violate,

would often be violated, what would become of

the duties of justice, truth, chastity, fidelity, which are often hard to observe, and which there can be many strong motives to violate?

A reasonable level of observance of these latter duties is required for the very existence of human society, which would crumble into nothing if mankind were not generally impressed with a reverence for those important rules of conduct.

This reverence is still further enhanced by the belief—first impressed by nature, later confirmed by reasoning and philosophy—that those important rules of morality are the commands and laws of the Deity, who will eventually reward those who obey them and punish those who don't.

Imprinted by nature: Men are naturally led to ascribe all their own sentiments and passions to whatever mysterious beings happen to be the objects of religious fear in their country. They attribute *their own* sentiments and passions to the gods because they can't conceive of any others. The unknown intelligences that they imagine but don't see *must* have some sort of resemblance to intelligences of which they have experience. During the ignorance and darkness of pagan superstition, mankind seem to have formed the ideas of their divinities so crudely that they ascribed to them, indiscriminately, *all* the passions of human nature, including the ones that do the least honour to our species—lust, hunger, greed, envy, revenge. So they were bound also to attribute to those beings (for whose excellence they still had the highest admiration) the sentiments and qualities that are the great ornaments of humanity, seeming to raise it to a resemblance of divine perfection—the love of virtue and beneficence, and the hatred of vice and injustice. A man who was harmed by someone else called on Jupiter to be witness of the wrong that had been done to him, and he couldn't doubt that Jupiter would behold it with the same indignation that fills ·even· the meanest human being who sees injustice being committed. The man who had harmed him felt himself to be a proper object of the detestation and resentment of mankind; and his natural fears led him to impute the same sentiments to those awe-inspiring ·divine· beings whose presence he couldn't avoid and whose power he couldn't resist. These natural hopes and fears and suspicions were propagated by sympathy, and confirmed by education; and the gods were universally represented as, and believed to be, the rewarders of humaneness and mercy and the avengers of treachery and injustice. And so it came about that religion, even in its crudest form, gave support to the rules of morality long before the age of disciplined reasoning

and philosophy. It was *important* for the happiness of mankind that the terrors of religion should in this way enforce the natural sense of duty—too important for nature to let it depend on the slowness and uncertainty of philosophical researches.

Confirmed by reasoning and philosophy: When these researches did take place, they confirmed the basic work that nature had done. Whatever we believe about the basis for our moral faculties—•certain work by reason, •a basic instinct called a 'moral sense' or •some other source in our nature—it can't be doubted that those faculties were given to us for the direction of our conduct in this life. They bring with them the most obvious badges of this authority, signifying that they were set up within us •to be the supreme deciders in all our actions, •to superintend all our senses, passions, and appetites, and •to judge how far each of them should be indulged or restrained. Some writers have claimed that our moral faculties are in this respect on a level with the other faculties and appetites of our nature, having no more right to restrain these others than the others have to restrain *them*; but this is completely wrong. No other faculty or source of action passes judgment on any other. Love doesn't judge regarding resentment, nor does resentment judge regarding love. Those two passions may be opposite to one another, but can't properly be said to 'approve' or 'disapprove' of one another. Whereas the moral faculties which are my present topic have as their special role the bestowing of censure or applause on all the other drives in our nature. They may be considered as a sort of *sense*, of which those drives are the objects. Every sense is supreme over its own objects. There is no appeal from the eye with regard to the beauty of colours, or from the ear with regard to the harmony of sounds, or from the sense of taste with regard to the agreeableness of flavours. Each of those senses is the final judge of its own objects. Whatever gratifies the sense of taste is sweet, whatever pleases the eye is beautiful, whatever soothes the ear is harmonious. The very *essence* of each of those qualities consists in its fitness to please the sense to which it is addressed. Well, the role of our moral faculties is, in the same way, to decide when the ear *ought* to be soothed, when the eye *ought* to be indulged, when the sense of taste *ought* to be gratified, when and to what extent any other drive in our nature ought to be indulged or restrained. Whatever is agreeable to our moral faculties is fit, right, and proper to be done; whatever is disagreeable to them is wrong, unfit, and improper. The sentiments that they approve of are graceful and

appropriate, the ones they disapprove of are ungraceful and inappropriate. The whole *meaning* of the words ‘right’, ‘wrong’, ‘fit’, ‘improper’, ‘graceful’, ‘inappropriate’ etc. has to do only with what pleases or displeases those faculties.

Since these faculties were plainly intended to be the governing drives in human nature, the rules that they prescribe should be regarded as the commands and laws of the Deity, passed on to us by the deputies that he has set up within us. All general rules are commonly called ‘laws’—e.g. the general rules that bodies conform to in collisions are called the ‘laws of motion’. But the label ‘laws’ is much more suitable for the general rules that our moral faculties conform to in approving or condemning sentiments or actions. Those rules are much more like laws *properly* so called, namely the general rules that a sovereign lays down to direct the conduct of his subjects. Like them, moral rules

- are rules to direct the free actions of men,
- are prescribed most surely by a lawful superior, and
- are associated with rewards and punishments.

[The middle one of those three is exactly as Smith wrote it.] God’s deputies within us always punish any violation of the rules that our moral faculties lay down, by the torments of inward shame and self-condemnation; and they always reward obedience with tranquillity of mind, contentment, self-satisfaction.

There are countless other considerations that confirm this conclusion. ·Here is a two-premise argument for it·:

- The happiness of mankind and of all other rational creatures seems to have been the original purpose of the Author of nature when he brought them into existence.

No other end seems worthy of the supreme wisdom and divine benevolence that we necessarily ascribe to him; and this opinion that we are led to by abstract thought about his infinite perfections is further confirmed when we consider the works of nature, which all seem to be intended to promote happiness and guard against misery.

- In acting according to the dictates of our moral faculties, we necessarily pursue the most efficient means for promoting the happiness of mankind.

Therefore:

- When we act in accordance with the dictates of our moral faculties, we are in a sense co-operating with the Deity and advancing as far as

we can the plan of Providence.

And, by a comparable argument, when we defy the dictates of our moral faculties we seem to obstruct somewhat the scheme that the Author of nature has established for the happiness and perfection of the world, and to declare ourselves to be in some measure the enemies of God. So we are naturally encouraged to hope for his extraordinary favour and reward in the one case, and to fear his vengeance and punishment in the other.

There are many other reasons. . . .tending to confirm and teach the same salutary doctrine. Consider the general rules by which external prosperity and adversity are commonly distributed in this life. If you do, you'll find—despite the disorder that everything seems to be in—that even here in this world every virtue naturally gets its proper reward, the one that is most fit to encourage and promote it; and it's only when there's a very unusual combination of factors that virtuous behaviour goes *entirely* unrewarded. •What reward is best for encouraging hard work, prudence, and reasonable caution? Success in every sort of business. And is it possible that someone with these virtues should go through his whole life without any such success? Wealth and external honours are the proper reward for those virtues, and they nearly always produce it. •What reward is best for promoting the practice of truth, justice, and humaneness? The confidence, respect, and love of those we live with. Humaneness doesn't want to be great; it wants to be beloved. Truth and justice don't rejoice in being wealthy but in being believed and trusted, and those are rewards that those virtues must almost always acquire. A good man may by some extraordinary and unlucky circumstances come to be suspected of a crime of which he is entirely incapable, and on that account be unjustly exposed for the rest of his life to the horror and aversion of mankind. By an accident of this kind he may be said to lose his all, despite his integrity and justice; just as a cautious and prudent man may be ruined by an earthquake or a flood. Accidents of the first (unjust life-long suspicion) kind are perhaps even rarer—more contrary to the general run of events—than those of the second (earthquake or flood); and it's still true that the practice of truth, justice, and humanity is an *almost* infallible method of acquiring what those virtues chiefly aim at, namely the confidence and love of those we live with. [Smith points out that an unjust suspicion will be less likely to stick if the victim of it is known to be in general a good man, and makes similar

remarks about the chances of someone's getting away with a bad action if he habitually behaves badly.]

So the general rules by which prosperity and adversity are commonly distributed, when considered in this cool and philosophical light, appear to be perfectly suited to the situation of mankind in this life; but they are by no means suited to some of our natural sentiments. •We have so much natural love and admiration for some virtues that we would like them to be rewarded with all sorts of honours and rewards, including ones that we know to be proper rewards for other qualities that don't always accompany the virtues in question. Magnanimity, generosity, and justice command so much admiration that we want to see them crowned with wealth, power, honours of every kind, these rewards being the natural consequences of prudence, hard work, and persistence—qualities that don't necessarily accompany magnanimity etc. •And we loathe some vices so much that we would like to heap onto them every sort of disgrace and disaster, including ones that are the natural consequences of different qualities. Fraud, falsehood, brutality, and violence arouse in every human breast such scorn and hatred that our indignation flares up when we see them possess advantages that they may in some sense be said to have merited by the diligence and hard work with which they are sometimes attended.

> The hard-working knave cultivates the soil; the lazy good man leaves it uncultivated. Who ought to reap the harvest? which of them should starve, and which should live in plenty?

The natural course of things decides this in favour of the knave; the natural sentiments of mankind decide in favour of the man of virtue. We judge that the good qualities of the knave are greatly overpaid by the advantages that they tend to bring him, and that the omissions of the good man are much too severely punished by the distress that they naturally bring on him. And human laws, which are consequences of human sentiments, take the life and the estate of the hard-working and careful •traitor, and provide extraordinary rewards for the fidelity and public spirit of the imprudent and careless •good citizen. ·I have stated this in terms of •Nature versus •human sentiments, but of course those sentiments are themselves parts of Nature·. So what is happening here is that man is directed *by* •*Nature* to correct somewhat the distribution of things that •she herself would otherwise have made. The rules she prompts him to follow for this purpose are different from the ones that she herself observes. She bestows on every virtue (and

every vice) the precise reward (or punishment) that is best fitted to encourage (or restrain) it. That is all she aims to do; she doesn't attend to the different degrees of merit (or demerit) that actions seem to have when viewed from the standpoint of human sentiments and passions. Man, on the other hand, attends *only* to this; he would like every virtue (or vice) to be rewarded (or punished) to a degree that exactly matches the degree of love and esteem (or contempt and abhorrence) that he himself has for it. The rules that Nature follows are fit for her, and those that man follows are fit for him; but both are calculated to promote the same great end, the order of the world and the perfection and happiness of human nature.

In his work of altering the distribution of things that natural events would make if they were left to themselves, man is like the gods of the poets: he is perpetually intervening by extraordinary means in favour of virtue and in opposition to vice, trying to turn away the arrow aimed at the head of the righteous and to accelerate the sword of destruction lifted up against the wicked. But he can't make the fortune of either the righteous or the wicked perfectly suitable to his own sentiments and wishes. •The natural course of events can't be entirely controlled by man's weak endeavours; the current is too rapid and too strong for him to stop it; and though the ·natural· rules that direct •it seem to have been established for the wisest and best purposes, they sometimes produce effects that shock all man's natural sentiments. These rules:

- •A large body of men will prevail over a small one,
- •Those who launch a project with forethought and all necessary preparation will prevail over those who oppose them without any forethought or preparation;

·are special cases of the more general rule, which is my present topic·,

- •No end can be achieved except by means that Nature has established for achieving it.

This rule seems to be not only necessary and unavoidable in itself, but even useful for getting men to pay attention and get to work. But when as a result of this rule violence and trickery prevail over sincerity and justice, what indignation it arouses in the breast of every human spectator! What sorrow and compassion for the sufferings of the innocent, and what furious resentment against the success of the oppressor! We are equally •grieved and •enraged at the wrong that is done, but we often find that we have no power to set it right. When this happens—when we despair of finding any

force on earth that can check the triumph of injustice—we naturally appeal to heaven, in the hope that in the after-life the great Author of our nature •will himself carry out the things that we have tried to carry out in this life under prompting by the principles that he has given us for the direction of our conduct; •will complete the plan that he has taught us to begin; and •will treat each person according to the works he has performed in this world. And so we are led to believe in a future state not only by the weaknesses of human nature and its hopes and fears, but also by the noblest and best action-drivers that it has—the love of virtue and hatred of vice and injustice. . . .

When the general rules that determine the merit and demerit of actions come in this way to be regarded as the •laws of an all-powerful Being who watches over our conduct and who will in a life to come reward the observance of •them and punish the breach of •them, this endows them with a new sacredness. Nobody who believes that there is a Deity can doubt that the supreme rule of our conduct ought to be **respect for the will of the Deity**. The very thought of disobedience seems to have the most shocking wrongness built into it. How pointless and absurd it would be for man to oppose or neglect the commands laid on him by ·God's· infinite wisdom and infinite power. How unnatural, how impiously ungrateful, not to reverence the laws that were prescribed to him by the infinite goodness of his Creator, even if there weren't to be any punishment for violating them. The sense of propriety is also backed by the strongest motives of self-interest. The idea that. . . .we are *always* acting under the eye of God, always exposed to the punishments of that great avenger of injustice, is a motive capable of restraining the most headstrong passions in anyone who has constantly thought about divine punishment and thus become familiar with the idea of it.

That is how religion reinforces the natural sense of duty; and it's the reason why mankind are generally disposed to trust the honesty of those who seem deeply impressed with religious sentiments. . . . Mankind assume that the religious man is influenced as everyone else is by

- •a concern for the propriety of action,
- •a concern for reputation, and
- •a desire for the applause of his own breast as well as for the applause of others,

but they think that the religious man is subject to another restraint as well, and never knowingly does anything that he wouldn't do in the presence of ·God·, that great superior who will eventually reward or punish him according to his deeds. . . . People undoubtedly judge rightly on this matter, and are right to place a double confidence in the rightness of the religious man's behaviour in any context where the first duty that religion requires is to fulfill all the obligations of morality. But this extra confidence of theirs is *not* justified in any context where •the natural principles of religion are corrupted by the quarrelsome and partisan zeal of some worthless clique or sect, or where •men are taught to regard trivial ceremonies as more immediate duties of religion than acts of justice and beneficence, and to imagine that by sacrifices and ceremonies and pointless begging they can bargain with the Deity for ·permission to engage in· fraud, perfidy, and violence!

Chapter 6: When should the sense of duty be the sole driver of our conduct? and when should it co-operate with other motives?

Religion provides such strong motives for the practice of virtue, and guards us by such powerful restraints from the temptations of vice, that many writers have thought that religious principles are the sole praiseworthy motives for action. Their view has been this:

> We ought not to reward from •gratitude or punish from •resentment; and we ought not to protect the helplessness of our children, or support the infirmities of our parents, from •natural affection. We should cleanse our breasts of all affections for particular objects, replacing them by one great affection, namely the love of God, the desire •to make ourselves agreeable to him and •to direct every detail of our conduct according to his will. We ought not to be grateful from gratitude, charitable from humaneness, public-spirited from the love of our country, or generous and just from the love of mankind. The sole driver and motive of our conduct in performing all those duties ought to be a sense that God has commanded us to perform them.

I shan't stop now to examine this position in detail, and will only remark that it's surprising to find it accepted by any sect who claim to belong to a religion in which, after the first precept, •to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength, has as its second precept •to love our neighbour as we love ourselves—because we love ourselves, surely, for our own sakes and not merely because we are commanded to do so! Christianity doesn't teach that the sense of duty should be the *only* driver of our conduct, but only that it should be the *dominant* one, which is also said by philosophy and indeed by common sense. Still, questions can arise about what distinguishes •cases where our actions ought to arise chiefly or entirely from a sense of duty or regard to general rules from •cases where some other sentiment or affection ought to join in and have a principal influence.

This distinction (which perhaps can't be made very precise) depends on two things: **(1)** the natural agreeableness or ugliness of the sentiment or affection that would prompt us to act without any regard for general rules;

and **(2)** the precision and exactness, or the looseness and imprecision, of the general rules themselves.

(1) I repeat, how far our actions ought to arise from a given affection rather than being based entirely on regard for a general rule depends on the natural agreeableness or ugliness of the affection itself.

All the graceful and admired actions to which the benevolent affections would prompt us ought to be based as much on the passions themselves as on any concern with general rules of conduct. A benefactor will think he has been poorly repaid if the beneficiary, in acknowledging the help he has been given, is acting merely from a cold sense of duty, with no affection towards the benefactor personally. A husband is dissatisfied with the most obedient wife when he imagines that her conduct is driven by nothing except her regard for what the marriage relation requires. A parent whose son, though not failing in any part of filial duty, isn't acting from the affectionate reverence that would be so appropriate, can fairly complain of his indifference. And a son couldn't be quite satisfied with a parent who, while performing all the duties of his ·parental· situation, has none of the fatherly fondness that might have been expected from him. With regard to all such benevolent and social affections, it is agreeable to see the sense of duty coming into play as a restraint rather than as a driver, •stopping us from doing too much rather than to •prompting us to do what we ought. It gives us pleasure to see a father obliged to restrain his own fondness, a friend obliged to set limits to his natural generosity, a person who has received a benefit obliged to restrain the naively enthusiastic gratitude arising from his own frame of mind.

When it comes to the malevolent and unsocial passions the contrary maxim holds. Whereas we ought

> to reward from the gratitude and generosity of our own hearts, without reluctance and without being obliged to think about how *right* rewarding is,

we ought always

> to punish with reluctance, more from a sense of the rightness of punishing than from any savage disposition to get revenge.

Nothing is more graceful than the behaviour of someone who seems to resent the greatest injuries more from a sense that they deserve resentment, are *proper* objects of it, than from himself feeling the furies of that disagreeable passion. That is someone •who (like a judge) considers only

the general rule that settles what vengeance is due for each particular offence; •who in acting on that rule feels less for what *he* has suffered than for what the offender is going to suffer; •who, though he is angry, remembers mercy and is disposed to interpret the rule in the gentlest and most merciful way that fair-minded humaneness could permit, consistently with good sense.

I remarked at the start of I.ii.5 [here] that the selfish passions occupy a sort of middle place, between the social affections and the unsocial ones. They're in the middle in our present context also. In all **small and ordinary** cases the pursuit of objects of individual self-interest ought to flow from a regard for the general rules that prescribe such conduct, rather than from any passion for the objects themselves. Even the most ordinary tradesman would be lowered in the opinion of his neighbours if he *earnestly plotted* to gain or to save a shilling. However poor he is, he shouldn't let his conduct express any attention to any such small matters for the sake of the things themselves. His situation may require him to be severely economical and carefully exact about money, but each particular exercise of that economy and care must come not so much from •a concern for that particular saving or gain as from •respect for the general rule that rigorously commands such a tenor of conduct. His parsimony today mustn't come from a desire for the particular threepence that he will save by it; and his attendance in his shop mustn't come from a passion for the particular tenpence he will acquire by it. Rather, both of these ought to come purely from a regard for the general rule, which prescribes with unrelenting severity this plan of conduct to every tradesman. That is how the character of a •miser differs from the character of a •person who works hard and is careful with money. •One is anxious about small matters for their own sake; •the other attends to them only in consequence of the scheme of life that he has laid down to himself.

It is quite otherwise with regard to the more **extraordinary and important objects** of self-interest. A person who doesn't pursue these with some earnestness for their own sake appears mean-spirited. We would despise a prince who wasn't anxious about conquering or defending a province. We would have little respect for a private gentleman who didn't make an effort to gain an estate or a considerable position in government, when he could get them without doing anything mean or wrong. A member of parliament who shows no keenness about getting re-elected is abandoned by his friends as altogether unworthy of their support. Even a tradesman is

thought a poor-spirited fellow among his neighbours if he doesn't bestir himself to get a special job or some uncommon advantage. This spirit and keenness constitutes the difference between an enterprising man and a dully regular one. . . .

(2) I also repeat: how far our actions ought to arise from a given affection rather than being based entirely on regard for a general rule will depend partly on what the relevant general rule is like—where it comes on the scale from •precise and exact through to •loose and imprecise.

The general rules of most of the virtues—the rules that fix how we are to behave in matters of prudence, charity, generosity, gratitude, friendship—are in many respects loose and imprecise, admitting of so many exceptions and needing so many riders and qualifications that it's hardly *possible* to regulate our conduct entirely in terms of them. Because the common proverbial maxims of •prudence are based on everyone's experience, they are perhaps the best general rules that can be given about •it. But it would be obvious and ridiculous pedantry to make a show of strictly and literally abiding by them. Of the virtues I have just listed, gratitude may be the one whose rules are the most precise and admit of the fewest exceptions. Thus:

> As soon as we can, we should give to our benefactor something that is at least as valuable as what he has given us

—that seems to be a pretty plain rule, and one that admits of hardly any exceptions. But look into this rule just a little and you'll see that it is extremely loose and imprecise, and admits of ten thousand exceptions. If your benefactor attended you in your sickness, ought you to attend him in his? or can you fulfill the obligation of gratitude by repaying him in some other way? If you ought to attend him, for how long ought you to do so? For the same time that he attended you, or longer, and how much longer? If your friend lent you money in your distress, ought you to lend him money in his? How much ought you to lend him? When ought you to lend it to him? Now, or tomorrow, or next month? And for how long a time? Obviously no general rule can be laid down that will give a precise answer to any of these questions. The difference between his character and yours, between his circumstances and yours, may be such that this could be the case:

> He lends you money, for which you are perfectly grateful; you refuse to lend him a halfpenny; and you are quite right to do so;

or this:

> He lends you money; you are willing to lend or even to give him ten times as much as he lent you; and this shows you to be guilty of the blackest ingratitude, not having fulfilled the hundredth part of your obligation to him.

Yet the general rules governing the duties of gratitude—which may be the most sacred of all the duties that the beneficent virtues prescribe to us—are the most precise. The rules setting out the actions required by friendship, humaneness, hospitality, generosity, are even more vague and indeterminate.

But there is one virtue whose general rules determine with the greatest exactness every action that it requires. This virtue is **justice**. The rules of justice are enormously precise, and don't allow for any exceptions or modifications other than ones that can be ascertained as precisely as the rules themselves (in fact most of them follow from the same principles as the rules of justice do). If I owe a man ten pounds, justice requires that I should pay him precisely ten pounds, either at the time agreed on or when he demands it. What I ought to perform, how much I ought to perform, when and where I ought to perform it, the whole nature and circumstances of the action prescribed, are all precisely fixed and determined. It may be clumsy and pedantic to make a show of too strictly keeping to the common rules of prudence or generosity, but no pedantry is involved in holding firmly to the rules of justice. Quite the contrary! The most sacred respect is due to them; and the actions that justice requires are *most* properly performed when the chief motive for performing them is a reverential and religious respect for the general rules that require them. In the exercise of any of the other virtues, our conduct should be directed by a certain idea of rightness, a certain taste for a particular tenor of conduct, rather than by obedience to a precise maxim or rule; and ·when a rule does come into it·, we should attend less to •the rule itself than to •what it is for and •what it is based on. But that's not how things stand with justice. Faced with the question 'What does justice require me to do in this situation?', the man who does •least in the way of hair-splitting and who adheres with the •most obstinate steadfastness to the general rules of justice themselves is the •most commendable man and the one who can •most be depended on. What the rules of justice are *for* is to stop us from harming our neighbour; but it can often be a crime to break them in cases where we could make some sort of case for the view that this particular breach couldn't harm anyone. A man

often becomes a villain the moment he begins, even in his own heart, to chicane in this manner [i.e. to engage in tricky, hair-splitting, special pleading]. The moment he *thinks of* departing from the most staunch and positive adherence to what those unbreakable rules tell him to do, he is no longer to be trusted, and there's no telling how far down the path of guilt he may go. The thief imagines that he does nothing wrong when he steals from the rich, stealing things that (he supposes) they can easily do without, things that they may indeed never even know to have been stolen from them. The adulterer imagines that he does nothing wrong when he corrupts his friend's wife, provided he hides his affair from the suspicion of the husband and doesn't disturb the peace of the family. Once we *begin* to give way to such subtleties, there is no wickedness so gross that we couldn't be capable of it.

We can compare •the rules of justice to the •rules of grammar, and compare the •rules of the other virtues to the •rules that critics lay down for achieving sublimity and elegance in writing. One lot of rules are precise, detailed, and indispensable. The other lot are loose, vague, and indeterminate, and give us only a general idea of the perfection we ought to aim at, rather than giving us any certain and infallible directions for achieving it. . . .

It can happen that we seriously and earnestly want to act so as to deserve approval, but mistake the proper rules of conduct and are thus misled by the very principle that ought to direct us. ·Although our conduct here is in a way *conscientious*·, it's no use expecting people entirely to approve of our behaviour. They can't enter into the absurd idea of duty that influenced us, or go along with any of the actions that followed from it. But there is something respectworthy in the character and behaviour of someone who is in this way betrayed into vice by a wrong sense of duty, or by what is called 'an erroneous conscience'. However bad the upshot of his mistake, generous and humane people will view him more with pity than with hatred or resentment. They will lament the weakness of human nature, which exposes us to such unfortunate delusions even while we are •sincerely working to achieve perfection and •trying to act in accordance with the best principle that can possibly direct us. What causes such gross perversions of our natural sentiments? The culprit is nearly always some false notion of religion. ·There is a reason for that·: the source of the greatest authority of the rules of duty is the only one that can distort our ideas of them to any considerable extent. In all other cases common sense is sufficient to direct

us to something that is not far from the most exact rightness of conduct; and as long as we earnestly want to do well, our behaviour will always be praiseworthy on the whole. Everyone agrees that the first rule of duty is to obey the will of God. But when it comes to the specific commandments that God's will may impose on us, men differ widely from one another. So this is a matter requiring the greatest restraint and mutual toleration; and although the defence of society requires that crimes should be punished, whatever the motives for them were, •a good man will always punish them reluctantly when they have clearly come from false notions of religious duty. •He will regret and sometimes even *admire* the unfortunate firmness and conscientiousness ·of the deluded criminals· at the very time that he punishes their crime; he won't have against them the indignation that he feels against other criminals. In Voltaire's fine tragedy *Mahomet* [full title: *Mahomet, or Fanaticism*] there is a good presentation of what ought to be our sentiments for crimes that come from such motives. (This is one of the most interesting spectacles that was ever presented on any stage, and perhaps the most instructive one.) In Voltaire's tragedy two innocent and virtuous young people. . . .are driven by the strongest motives of a false religion to commit a horrible murder, one that shocks all the principles of human nature. A venerable old man is pointed out to them as a sacrifice that God has explicitly demanded from them, and they are ordered to kill him. (The old man has expressed the most tender affection for them both; they have both felt the highest reverence and esteem for him, although he is an open enemy of their religion; and he is their father, though they don't know this—they don't even know that they are brother and sister.) Facing the prospect of committing this crime, they are tortured with all the agonies that can arise from the struggle between

•the idea of the indispensableness of religious duty

on one side and

•compassion, gratitude, reverence for the age, and love for the humanity and virtue of the person they are going to destroy

on the other. But the sense of duty eventually prevails over all the likeable weaknesses of human nature. They carry out the crime that was demanded of them, then immediately learn their error and the fraud that had deceived them, and are driven wild with horror, remorse, and resentment. The way we *do* feel towards this unhappy pair is how we *ought to* feel for anyone who is in this manner misled by religion—provided we are sure that it

really *is* religion that misleads him, and not the pretence of it that has been used to cover some of the worst human passions.

Just as a person may act wrongly by following a wrong sense of duty, so nature may lead him to act rightly in opposition to such a wrong sense. When this happens, we can't be unpleased to see the victory go to the motive that we think ought to prevail, though the person himself is so misguided as to think otherwise. But because his conduct is an effect of weakness and not of principle, we are far from giving it our complete approval. [Smith wrote 'so weak as to think otherwise', but this was surely a slip. The phrase 'an effect of weakness' is all right; it can refer to the person's 'weakness' in not doing what he thinks to be his duty.] Take the case of a bigoted Roman Catholic who is present at the massacre of St Bartholomew, and is so overcome by compassion that he saves some unhappy Protestants whom he thinks it his duty to destroy. He doesn't seem to be entitled to the high applause that we would have given him if he had exerted that same generosity with complete self-approval. We might be pleased with the humaneness of his feelings, but we would still regard him with a sort of •pity that is flatly inconsistent with the •admiration that is owed to perfect virtue. It's the same case with all the other passions. We don't dislike seeing them lead the person to behave rightly, even when his false notion of duty directs him to restrain them. Suppose that a devout Quaker is struck on one cheek and instead of turning up the other he so completely forgets his literal interpretation of our Saviour's precept and bestows some good discipline on the brute who hit him. We wouldn't find this disagreeable! We would laugh and enjoy his spirit, liking him all the better because of it. But we wouldn't regard him with anything close to the respect and esteem that would seem to be owing to someone who on such an occasion had acted rightly from a just sense of what was the right thing to do. No action can properly be called virtuous unless it is accompanied with the sentiment of self-approval.

Part IV: The effect of utility on the sentiment of approval

Chapter 1: The beauty that the appearance of utility gives to all the productions of art, and the widespread influence of this type of beauty
Chapter 2: How the characters and actions of men are made beautiful by their appearance of utility. Is our perception of this beauty one of the *basic sources of approval*?

Chapter 1: The beauty that the appearance of utility gives to all the productions of art, and the widespread influence of this type of beauty

Everyone who has thought hard about what constitutes the nature of beauty has seen that one of its principal sources is *utility*. Someone looking over a house gets pleasure from its convenience as well as from its ·formal· regularity [and, Smith adds with a rather obscure example, he is as much displeased when he sees features of the house that interfere with its function as when he sees features that are aesthetically displeasing. Then:] The fitness of any system or machine to produce the end for which it was intended confers a certain rightness and beauty on the whole thing, making it a pleasure to think about—and this is so obvious that nobody has overlooked it.

Why is utility so pleasing? This has been answered by Hume [whom Smith doesn't name, but identifies through a series of compliments to his thought and writing]. According to him, a thing's utility pleases its owner by continually suggesting to him the pleasure or convenience that it is fitted to promote. Every time he looks at it he is reminded of this pleasure, so that the object in question becomes a source of continual satisfaction and enjoyment. The spectator's sympathy leads him to have the sentiments of the owner, making him view the object in that same agreeable light. When we visit the palaces of the great, we can't help feeling the satisfaction that *we* would enjoy if we were the owners of so much ingeniously contrived accommodation. And he gives a similar account of why the appearance of *in*convenience should make an object disagreeable to the owner and to the spectator.

But there's another fact ·about utility and beauty· that hasn't previously been noticed by anyone, so far as I know. It is this:

> An artifact's being skillfully designed so as to be suitable for some purpose is often valued more than is the purpose itself; exact adjustment of the means for attaining some convenience or pleasure is often valued more highly than the convenience or pleasure itself, though *they* would seem to be the sole source of the artifact's merit.

Although this phenomenon hasn't been noticed before, it is quite common, and can be observed in a thousand instances, both in the most trivial and in the most important concerns of human life.

A man comes into his chamber and finds the chairs all standing in the middle of the room; he is angry with his servant; and rather than see the chairs stay there he takes the trouble himself to put them all in their proper places with their backs to the wall. The whole propriety of this new state of affairs comes from its greater convenience in leaving the floor free and disengaged. To get this convenience he gives himself more trouble than he could have suffered from the lack of it; because he could easily have sat down on one of the chairs, which is probably what he does when his work is finished. So it seems that what he wanted was not so much •this convenience as •an arrangement of things that promotes it. Yet this convenience is what ultimately recommends that arrangement, giving it all its propriety and beauty.

Another example: A watch that loses two minutes a day is despised by its owner, who cares about watches. He sells it for a couple of guineas and spends fifty guineas on a new watch that won't lose more than thirty seconds a week. Now, the only use of watches is to tell us what the time is, to save us from missing an appointment or suffering some other inconvenience through not knowing the time; but the person who is so choosy about his watch won't always be found to be more scrupulously punctual than other men, or more anxiously concerned for any other reason to know precisely what time of day it is. What interests him is not so much •the acquiring of this piece of knowledge as •the perfection of the machine that enables him to acquire it.

It's common for people to ruin themselves by spending money on trinkets that are useful in some trivial way. What pleases these lovers of toys is not so much •the use they make of their little machines as •the machines' fitness to be used. Their pockets are stuffed with little conveniences; they have new pockets, unknown in the clothes of other people, in order to carry a greater number ·of 'useful' gadgets·. They walk around about loaded with a multitude of baubles,. . . .some of which may sometimes be of some little use, but all of which might at all times be well done without. The whole use that is made of them is certainly not worth the fatigue of bearing the burden!

And it's not only with regard to such trivial objects that our conduct is influenced by this motive—·this liking for things because of what they *could* do, without much interest in having them actual *do* those things·. It is

often the secret motive of very serious and important pursuits in both private and public life.

Consider the case of a poor man's son whom heaven in its anger has infected with ambition. When he begins to look around him, he admires the condition of the rich. [Smith goes into details: the convenience of larger home, the ease of riding on horseback and of having servants to do everything, and so on; and his idea that with all these conveniences of wealth he would be contentedly idle. Then:] He devotes himself for ever to the pursuit of wealth and greatness. To get the conveniences that these provide, he *works*, giving himself in the first year—indeed in the first *month* —of his work more fatigue of body and more anxiety of mind than he would have suffered through the whole of his life from the lack of wealth. He works to distinguish himself in some laborious profession, labouring night and day to acquire talents superior to those of his competitors. He then tries to bring those talents into public view, taking every chance to get employment. For this purpose he makes himself pleasant to everyone, serves people whom he hates, and is deferential to people he despises. Throughout his life he pursues the idea of a certain artificial and elegant *repose* •which he may never arrive at, •for which he sacrifices a real tranquillity that is always in his power, and •which, if in old age he at last achieves it, he will find to be in no way preferable to the humble security and contentment that he had gave up in order to pursue wealth and greatness. *Then*. . . .he will start to learn that wealth and greatness are only trivially useful, mere trinkets, no more fit for procuring ease of body or tranquillity of mind than the tweezer-cases of the lover of toys; and, also like them, giving trouble to the person who carries them around with him that far outweighs any advantages they can provide him with. [Smith develops this comparison at great length. The useful little 'toys', he says, may actually be as useful as a grand house or a retinue of servants, he says, but the owner of the 'toys' won't be admired and envied as much as the owner of the things that wealth and greatness procure. The only real advantage of the latter is the attitude of other people to the wealthy great man. But that (Smith continues) throws our attention onto the admiring spectators: why do *they* so much admire the condition of the wealthy man? It's not that they think he is happier than other people; the object of their admiration is the wealthy man's ownership of so many things that are *fitted to* produce ease and happiness. Having thus brought the wheel full circle,

Smith returns to the state of the wealthy man in old age:] In his heart he curses ambition, and vainly pines for the ease and idleness of youth, pleasures that are gone for ever, having been foolishly sacrificed for something that can't give him real satisfaction now that he has it. That's how things look to every wealthy man who is led by depression or disease to *attend* to his own situation and to think about why he is actually so unhappy. Power and riches appear then to be what they actually are. . . . They are immense structures

- which it takes a lifetime's work to build,
- which are constantly threatening to ·collapse and· overwhelm the person who lives in them, and
- which, while they stand, may save him from some smaller inconveniences but can't protect him from any of the severer harshnesses of the season.

They keep off the summer shower (·to continue the metaphor·) but not the winter storm. They always leave the rich man as much—sometimes even *more*—exposed to anxiety, fear, and sorrow; to diseases, danger, and death.

Any of us when ill or depressed may have this view of things, entirely depreciating the great objects of human desire; but when we're in better health and a better mood we always see them in a more favourable light. When we are in pain and sorrow our imagination seems to be confined and cooped up within our own persons, but in times of ease and prosperity it expands itself to everything around us. *Then* we are charmed by the beauty of the accommodation that palaces provide, and the living arrangements of the great; and we admire how everything is fitted to promoting their ease, anticipating their wants, gratifying their wishes, and entertaining their most trivial desires. If we take the real satisfaction that any of these things is capable providing, and consider it *in itself*, independently of the beauty of the arrangement that is fitted to promote it, it will always appear to be enormously negligible and trivial. But we don't often look at it in this abstract and philosophical way. We naturally run it together it in our imagination with the order, the regular and harmonious movement, of the system or machine. . . .that produces it. The pleasures of wealth and greatness, when considered in this complex view, strike the imagination as something grand and beautiful and noble, the attainment of which is well worth all the toil and anxiety that we are so apt to bestow on it. [By 'this

complex view' Smith means the way of looking at the thing that runs together •the thing's fitness to produce a certain result and •the pleasures of that result.]

[From here to the end of this chapter, Smith goes on at undue length about matters that aren't central to his announced main topic in the chapter. That material won't be much abbreviated here, because it's a notable precursor of ideas that Smith was to present 17 years later in *The Wealth of Nations*, widely regarded as the first work in theoretical economics. We find here the phrase 'invisible hand', which was made famous by the later work.]

It's just as well that nature deceives us in this way. This deception is what starts men working and keeps them at it. It is what first prompted men to cultivate the soil, to build houses, to found cities and commonwealths, and to invent and improve all the sciences and arts that make human life noble and glorious, having entirely changed the whole face of the globe, turning the nature's primitive forests into agreeable and fertile plains, and making the trackless and barren ocean a new source of food and the great high road of communication to the different nations of the earth. These human labours have required the earth to redouble her natural fertility, and to maintain a greater number of inhabitants. The proud and unfeeling landlord views his extensive fields and—without a thought for the wants of anyone else—imaginatively consumes himself the whole harvest that grows on them; but what of it? The homely and common proverb *The eye is larger than the belly* is exactly true of this landlord. The capacity of his stomach bears no proportion to the vastness of his desires, and won't receive any more food than does the stomach of the lowest peasant. He has to distribute the rest among

- •those who elegantly prepare the little that he himself makes use of,
- •those who manage the palace in which this little is to be consumed, and
- •those who provide and service all the baubles and trinkets that have a role in the great man's way of life.

[Smith isn't talking about the great man's tweezers and nail-clippers! He is implying, through a metaphor, that a carriage and a grand kitchen and servants' uniforms etc. are—from a serious and mature point of view—on a par with such 'baubles and trinkets'.] Thus, all these people get •through his luxury and caprice the share of the necessities of life that they would never have received •through his humaneness or his justice. The produce of the soil always maintains just about as many inhabitants as it is capable of maintaining. All the rich do is to select from the heap the most precious and agreeable portions. They consume little more than the poor; and in spite of their natural selfishness and greed, and despite the fact that

> they are guided only by their own convenience, and all they want to get from the labours of their thousands of employees is the gratification of their own empty and insatiable desires,

they do share with the poor the produce of all their improvements [meaning: their well-cultivated land, their up-to-date ploughs, their state of the art milking sheds, etc.]. They are **led by an invisible hand** to share out life's necessities in just about the same way that they would have been shared out if the earth been divided into equal portions among all its inhabitants. And so without intending it, without knowing it, they advance the interests of the society ·as a whole·, and provide means for the survival of the species. When Providence divided the earth among a few lordly masters, it didn't forget or abandon those who seemed to have been left out in the distribution—these too enjoy their share of all that the earth produces. In terms of the *real* happiness of human life, they are in no respect inferior to those who seem to be so far above them. In ease of body and peace of mind, all the different ranks of life are nearly on a level; the beggar sitting in the sun beside the highway *has* the security that kings *fight for*.

·There are also other motivations that lead to conduct serving the public good although they don't involve any thought of doing such a thing·. Institutions that tend to promote the public welfare often arise not from a wish for *that* but from a love of system, a regard for the beauty of order, of art and contrivance. [In Smith's day any activity could be called an 'art' if it involved general techniques needing skill to implement. So clockmaking and plumbing would be 'arts'. The arts in *our* narrower sense of the word are specifically referred to here as 'the superior arts' and here as 'the liberal and ingenious arts'.] When a patriot makes efforts to improve any part of the nation's public life, his conduct doesn't always arise from pure sympathy with the happiness of those who are to get the benefit of it. When a public-spirited man encourages the mending of highways, it's not usually from a fellow-feeling with those who earn their living driving carts or carriages. When a legislature establishes premiums and other encouragements to advance the manufacture of linen or woollen garments, its conduct seldom comes from pure sympathy with the wearer of cheap or fine cloth, let alone sympathy with the manufacturer or merchant. The perfection of policy, the extension of trade and manufacturing, are noble and magnificent objectives. The thought of them pleases us, and we have a concern with anything that can tend to advance them. They are part of the great system of government, and the wheels of the political machine seem

to turn more smoothly by means of them. We do take pleasure in seeing the perfection of such a beautiful and grand system, and we're uneasy until we can remove anything that might in any way disturb or overload the regularity of its motions. But no constitution of government is valued except in proportion as it tends to promote the happiness of those who live under it. That is its sole use and end—·it's all it *does* and all it *is for*·. And yet we have certain spirit of system, a certain love of art and contrivance, that leads us sometimes to seem to value the means more than the end, and to be eager to promote the happiness of our fellow-creatures not so much from •any immediate sense of what they either suffer or enjoy as from •a desire to perfect and improve a certain beautiful and orderly ·political· system. Some public-spirited men have shown themselves to be in other respects not very sensitive to the feelings of humaneness. And there have been men of the greatest humaneness who seem to have been entirely devoid of public spirit. You'll probably find in the circle of your acquaintance instances both these kinds. . . . If you want to implant public virtue in the breast of someone who seems not to care about his country's interests, it will often be no use telling him about the advantages people get from living in a well-governed state—that they are better housed, better clothed, better fed. These considerations make no great impression on many people. You'll have a better chance of persuading your man if you describe the great system of public policy that procures these advantages, if you explain the inter-connections of its various parts, the subordination of some of them to others, and the subservience of all of them to the happiness of the society; if you show

- •how this system might be introduced into his own country,
- •what is obstructing it from existing there at present,
- •how those obstructions might be removed, and all the wheels of the machine of government be made to move with more harmony and smoothness, without grating on one another or retarding one another's motions.

It's hardly possible that someone should listen to all that without feeling some degree of public spirit coming to life within him. He will, at least for the moment, feel some desire to remove those obstructions and to put into motion that beautiful and orderly machine. Nothing tends to promote public spirit as much as the study of politics does—the study of •the various systems of civil government, their advantages and disadvantages, of •the

constitution of our own country, its situation and interests in relation to foreign nations, its commerce, its defence, the disadvantages it struggles with, the dangers to which it may be exposed, how to remove the disadvantages and guard against the dangers. . . .

Chapter 2: How the characters and actions of men are made beautiful by their appearance of utility. Is our perception of this beauty one of the *basic sources of approval*?

The characters of men, as well as the institutions of civil government that they construct, can be fit to promote or to disturb the happiness of individuals and of the society. The prudent, equitable, active, resolute, and sober character promises prosperity and satisfaction to the person himself and to everyone connected with him. The rash, insolent, slothful, effeminate, and voluptuous character points to ruin for the individual and misfortune for everyone who has anything to do with him. The first turn of mind has at least all the beauty that can belong to the most perfect machine that was ever invented for promoting the most agreeable purpose; and the second has all the ugliness [Smith: 'deformity'; see note here] of the most awkward and clumsy contraption. What other •institution of government could have as much tendency to promote the happiness of mankind as •the general prevalence of wisdom and virtue? What government *is* is merely an imperfect remedy for the shortage of wisdom and virtue. So any beauty that a civil government can have because of its utility must in a much higher degree be a beauty of wisdom and virtue. And on the other side, no public policy can be as ruinous and destructive as the vices of ·individual· men. When bad government has terrible consequences, the way it does so—*always*—is by not sufficiently guarding against the mischiefs arising from human wickedness.

This beauty and ugliness that characters seem to derive from their usefulness or inconvenience are apt to make their greatest impression on people who are thinking about the actions and conduct of mankind in an abstract and philosophical way. When a philosopher sets out to examine why humaneness is approved of, or why cruelty condemned, he doesn't always form a clear and distinct conception of any one particular action either of cruelty or of humaneness; he is likely to be contented with the vague and indeterminate idea that the general names of those qualities suggest to him. But the propriety or impropriety, the merit or demerit, of actions stands out clearly only in particular instances. It's only when particular examples are given that we get a clear idea of the concord or

disagreement between our own affections and those of the agent, or feel a social gratitude towards him in one case and a sympathetic resentment in the other. When we think about virtue and vice in an abstract and general manner, the qualities by which they arouse these various sentiments seem to a large extent to disappear, and the sentiments themselves become less obvious and noticeable. Instead, the good effects of virtue and the disastrous consequences of vice seem then to rise up, to stand out, to distinguish themselves from all the other qualities of virtue and vice.

The same able and enjoyable author who first explained why utility pleases us—·David Hume·—has been so struck with this view of things that he has reduced all our approval of virtue to a perception of the kind of beauty that results from the appearance of utility. He says that

> •the only qualities of the mind that are approved of as virtuous are ones that are useful or agreeable either to the person himself or to other people; and
>
> •the only qualities that are disapproved of as vicious are ones that have the opposite tendency.

If you look into this carefully you'll find, I think, that this is entirely correct. That's apparently because Nature has neatly adjusted our sentiments of approval and disapproval to ·fit· the convenience of the individual and of the society. But I maintain that our view of this utility or harmfulness isn't the first source, or the principal source, of our approval and disapproval. These sentiments ·of approval or disapproval· are no doubt enriched and enlivened by our perception of the beauty or ugliness that results from this utility or harmfulness; but they are basically and essentially different from this perception. Here are two reasons for saying this.

(1) It seems impossible that our approval of virtue should be a sentiment of the same kind as we have when we approve of a convenient and well-designed building; or that we should have no reason for praising a man except one that would also be a reason for commending a chest of drawers!

(2) If you look into it you'll find that our approval of a given state of mind is seldom based primarily on its utility, and that the sentiment of approval always has as one of its components a sense of propriety that is quite distinct from the perception of utility. We can see this with regard to *all* the qualities that are approved of as virtuous—the ones that are

(according to me) valued as useful to ourselves, as well as those that are valued because of their usefulness to others.

The qualities that are most useful to ourselves are **(a)** superior reason and understanding, enabling us to work out what consequences, good or bad, are likely to result from our actions; and **(b)** self-control, enabling us to abstain from present pleasure (or endure present unpleasure) in order to get greater pleasure (or avoid greater unpleasure) at some future time. The virtue of *prudence*, which is of all the virtues the one that is most useful to the individual, consists in the union of those two qualities—·i.e. in the combination of •superior reason and understanding and •self-control·.

(a) Superior reason and understanding are—as I pointed out earlier [here]—basically approved of as just and right and precise, not merely as useful or advantageous. The greatest and most admired exercises of human reason have been in the abstruser sciences, especially the higher parts of mathematics; but it's not very obvious that those sciences are useful to individuals or to the public, and to show that they are would require a train of thought of which some parts would be hard to grasp. So it wasn't •their utility that first recommended the mathematical sciences to public admiration. •This quality wasn't emphasized at all until there came to be a need for some reply to the reproaches of people who, having no taste for such sublime discoveries, tried to dismiss them as useless.

(b) The exercise of self-control in restraining our present appetites so as to gratify them more fully later on is approved of not only as *useful* but also, equally, as *right*. When we act like that the sentiments that influence our conduct seem to coincide exactly with those of the spectator. The spectator doesn't feel the tug of our present appetites. To him the pleasure that we are to enjoy next week or next year matters just as much as the pleasure that we are to enjoy right now. When ·our self-control lapses, and· we sacrifice the future for the sake of the present, our conduct appears to the spectator to be utterly wild and absurd; he can't enter into our motivation for behaving like that. On the other side, when we abstain from present pleasure so as to get greater pleasure later on, acting as if we were as concerned about the remote object as we are about the one that presses on the senses right now, the spectator is bound to approve of our behaviour because our affections in this matter exactly correspond with his. Also, he knows from experience how few are capable of such self-control, so he looks on our conduct with a considerable degree of wonder and admiration. That is the source for the

enormous respect that all men naturally have for a steady perseverance in the practice of frugality, hard work, and application, even when these are directed solely to the project of becoming rich. [Smith now says all this again, in only slightly different words. Then:] Without his consciousness of this deserved approval and respect, the agent wouldn't be able to keep up this tenor of conduct [see note on 'tenor' here]. The pleasure that we're to enjoy ten years hence concerns us so little in comparison with the pleasure that we can enjoy to-day, the passion aroused by the future pleasure is naturally so weak in comparison with the violent emotion that the present pleasure is apt to give rise to, that the former could never outweigh the latter unless it was supported by the sense of propriety, the consciousness that we deserve •everyone's respect and approval if we act in one of the two ways and •everyone's contempt and derision if we act in the other.

Humaneness, justice, generosity, and public spirit are the qualities most useful to others. I have already explained what the propriety of humaneness and justice consists in: I showed how greatly our respect and approval of those qualities depends on the match between the affections of the agent and those of the spectators.

Generosity and public spirit are proper for the same reason that justice is. Don't confuse generosity with humaneness. Those two qualities seem at first sight to be close relatives of one another, but it isn't always true that someone who has one will have the other. Humaneness is the virtue of a woman, generosity the virtue of a man. The fair sex, who usually have much more tenderness than we males do, seldom have as much generosity. That women rarely make considerable donations is an observation of the civil law. [That sentence is verbatim Smith.] Humaneness consists merely in the spectator's sharp fellow-feeling with the sentiments of the persons principally concerned—his grieving for their sufferings, resenting their injuries, and rejoicing at their good fortune. The most humane actions don't need self-denial or self-control or much exercise of the sense of propriety. They consist only in doing what this sharp sympathy would, on its own, prompt us to do. But generosity is different. Whenever we are generous it is because in some respect we put some other person ahead of ourselves, sacrificing some great and important interest of our own to an equal interest of a friend or of a superior. When someone x

> gives up his claim to a governmental position that was the great object of his ambition, because he thinks that someone else y is better entitled

to it,

or when someone x

risks his own life in defence of the life of his friend y, because he judges y's life to be more important than his own,

he isn't acting from humaneness, feeling y's concerns more sharply than he feels his own. He considers those conflicting interests not in the light in which they naturally appear to •him but in the light in which they appear to •others. All the bystanders can rightly have a greater concern for y's success or preservation than for x's, but that can't be x's position. So when he sacrifices his own interests to those of y, he is accommodating himself to the sentiments of the spectator, making an effort of magnanimity to act in accordance with what he thinks must naturally be the view of the matter that any third person has. When a soldier gives up his life in order to defend that of his officer, it may be that the death of that officer, if it happened without this soldier's being at fault, wouldn't have affected the soldier much, causing him less sorrow than a quite small disaster to himself—·e.g. his loss of a finger·—would cause. ·So his act of self-sacrifice isn't to be understood in terms of the relative value of lives·. He is trying to act so as to deserve applause, giving the impartial spectator a role in the guidance of his conduct; he feels that *to everyone but himself* his own life is a trifle compared with that of his officer. . . . [Note with care that he is trying to act so as to *deserve* applause; this doesn't mean that he is trying to win applause.]

[Smith now reworks these same ideas in connection with 'greater exertions of public spirit'. One example concerns a soldier who risks his life in an attempt to add to 'the dominions of his sovereign' some little sliver of territory that he doesn't care about in the least, on his own account. Another is historical: 'the first Brutus' [this is centuries before the Brutus who was Julius Caesar's friend and assassin] delivered his sons up for capital punishment 'because they had conspired against the rising liberty of Rome'. In doing this, 'he viewed them with the eyes not of a father but of a Roman citizen'. Smith continues:] In cases like these our admiration is based not so much on the •utility of the action as on its •propriety—its unexpected and therefore great, noble, and exalted propriety. When we take into account the action's utility, that undoubtedly gives it a new beauty and still further recommends it to our approval. But this beauty isn't much noticed except by men who reflect and theorize; it is *not* the quality that first recommends such actions to the natural sentiments of the bulk of mankind.

Notice that insofar as the sentiment of approval arises from a perception of this beauty of utility, it doesn't involve *any* reference to the sentiments of anyone else. Suppose it were possible that a person should grow up to manhood without any communication with society, ·and consider what his attitudes to his own conduct could be·. His own actions might be agreeable or disagreeable to him on account of their tendency to his happiness or disadvantage. He might perceive beauty of this kind in prudence, temperance, and good conduct (and ugliness in the opposite behaviour); he might view his own temperament and character with the sort of satisfaction we get from a well-contrived machine (or distaste and dissatisfaction from an awkward and clumsy contrivance). These perceptions of his, however, would be merely matters of *taste*. They would be weak and delicate, like the perceptions whose correctness is the basis for taste properly so-called; and someone in this solitary and miserable condition probably wouldn't pay much attention to them. Even if they did occur to him, they wouldn't affect him before he was connected to society in the way they would affect him after, and because of, the making of that connection. He wouldn't be cast down with inward shame at the thought of this ugliness; nor would he be elated with secret triumph by the consciousness of the contrary beauty. He wouldn't exult from the notion of deserving reward in the one case, or tremble from the suspicion of deserving punishment in the other. All such sentiments presuppose the idea of some *other* being who is the natural judge of the person that feels them; and it's only by sympathy with the decisions of that judge of his conduct that he can experience either the triumph of self-applause or the shame of self-condemnation.

Part V: The moral influence of custom and fashion

Chapter 1: The influence of custom and fashion on our notions of beauty and ugliness
Chapter 2: The influence of custom and fashion on moral sentiments

Chapter 1: The influence of custom and fashion on our notions of beauty and ugliness

In addition to the ones I have listed, there are ·two· other considerable influences on the moral sentiments of mankind; they are the main causes of the many irregular and discordant opinions that become dominant in different ages and nations concerning what is blameworthy or praiseworthy. These two sources of influence are •custom and •fashion— forces that extend their sway over our judgments concerning beauty of every kind.

When two objects have often been seen together, the imagination acquires a habit of passing easily from one to the other: when one appears we're willing to bet that the second will follow. With no outside help they put us in mind of one another, and our attention glides easily along them. If we didn't have this habit, we wouldn't see any real beauty in their union; but when custom *has* connected them together in this way, we feel that something is *wrong* when they are separated. We think that one of them is awkward [Smith's word, here and below] when it appears without its usual companion; we miss something that we expected to find, and the habitual arrangement of our ideas is disturbed by the disappointment. A suit of clothes, for example, seems to lack something if it doesn't have some ornament—however insignificant—that it usually has. . . . When there is something *naturally* proper in the union ·of the two items·, custom increases our sense of it, and makes a different arrangement appear even more disagreeable than it would otherwise seem to be. Anything that is clumsy or awkward will be especially disgusting to people who have been accustomed to seeing things ·that were made or chosen or arranged· in good taste. When a conjunction of items is improper, we'll have less sense of its impropriety—perhaps even *no* sense of it—if it's something to which we have become accustomed. Those who have been accustomed to slovenly disorder lose all sense of neatness or elegance. . . .

Fashion is different from custom—or, rather, it's a particular species of it. Something that everybody wears can't be called *fashion*. The word applies to what is worn by people who are of a high rank or exceptional character. The graceful, easy, commanding manners of the great, when joined to the usual richness and magnificence of their clothing, make the style they adopt seem graceful. As long as they continue to use this style, it

is connected in our imaginations with the idea of something genteel and magnificent, so that we come to see the style itself as genteel and magnificent, even if there's nothing special about it considered in itself. As soon as the higher ranks in society drop it, the style loses all the grace it seemed to possess before, and instead seems to have something of the meanness and awkwardness of the inferior ranks of people who now use it.

[The remaining seven book-pages of this chapter contain a sober discussion of fashions in the arts. Everyone agrees that custom and fashion rule in matters of clothing and furniture; but they also have great influence over people's tastes in music, poetry, and architecture. Some of those fashions last a long time, because the objects they concern are very durable —e.g. buildings, poems. Most people know little about what customs and fashions prevailed at other times and/or in other places, and this ignorance leads them to downplay fashion and to think that *their* tastes 'are founded on reason and nature, not on habit'. Smith challenges them on this, demanding to know what objective reason can be given for the rightness of various time-honoured features of ancient Greek temples. And fashion governs literary judgments too. A verse-form that the French regard as right for tragedy would strike the English as an absurd vehicle for that kind of dramatic content. Then Smith turns to the more interesting topic of enforced changes in fashion:]

An eminent artist will bring about a considerable change in the established modes of any one of those arts, introducing a new fashion of writing, music, or architecture. Just as the dress of an agreeable man of high rank recommends itself, and comes soon to be admired and imitated, however peculiar and fantastic it is, so the excellences of an eminent master ·in one of the creative arts· recommend his peculiarities, and his manner becomes the fashionable style in the art that he practises. Within the past fifty years the Italians' taste in music and architecture has undergone a considerable change, resulting from imitating the peculiarities of some eminent masters in each of those arts. [He gives examples of Latin writers who were criticised for features of their style that were later followed by many others, and remarks:] A writer must have many great qualities if he is to be able to make his very faults agreeable! The highest praise one can give to an author is to say that he •refined the taste of a nation; the second highest may be to say that he •corrupted it! In our own language,. . . .the quaintness of Butler has given place to the plainness of Swift. The rambling

freedom of Dryden, and the correct but often tedious and prosaic languor of Addison, are no longer objects of imitation; all long verses are now written after the manner of the vigorous precision of Pope.

And it's not only over the productions of the •arts that custom and fashion hold sway. They have the same kind of influence over our judgments regarding •natural objects. Think about the variety of the forms that are found to be beautiful in different species of things! The proportions that are admired in one animal are altogether different from the ones that are valued in another. Every class of things has its own special conformation—one that is approved of and has a beauty of its own—distinct from that of every other species. That is what led Buffier to maintain that the beauty of any object consists in the form and colour that are centrally typical of the species to which the object belongs, because they will be the form and colour that we are, in our experience of that species, most accustomed to. [Smith expounds this theory at great length, without doing much to make it seem worth studying. Smith agrees that our judgments about things' beauty are much affected by what we are *used to*, but he denies that that's the whole story:] The utility of any form, its fitness for the useful purposes for which it was intended, obviously counts in its favour and makes it agreeable to us, independently of custom ·or usualness·. Certain colours are more agreeable than others, and give more delight to the eye the *first* time it ever beholds them. A smooth surface is more agreeable than a rough one. Variety is more pleasing than a tedious undiversified uniformity. Connected variety, in which each new appearance seems to be introduced by what went before it, and in which all the adjoining parts seem to have some natural relation to one another, is more agreeable than a disjointed and disorderly assemblage of unconnected objects. But. . . .I go along with Buffier's ingenious theory to this extent: it hardly ever happens that a particular thing's external form is so beautiful that it gives pleasure although it is quite contrary to custom and unlike anything we have been used to in that species of things; or so ugly as to be disagreeable although custom uniformly supports it and gets us used to seeing it in every single individual of the kind.

Chapter 2: The influence of custom and fashion on moral sentiments

Our sentiments concerning every kind of beauty are so much influenced by •custom and fashion that •those forces are bound to have some influence on our sentiments concerning the beauty of conduct. But their influence in this domain seems to be much less than it is everywhere else. It may be that custom can reconcile us to *any* form of external objects, however absurd and fantastical; but no custom will ever reconcile us to the characters and conduct of a Nero or a Claudius—one will always be an object of dread and hatred, the other of scorn and derision. The mechanisms of the imagination, on which our sense of beauty depends, are delicately fine-tuned and can easily be altered by habit and education; but our sentiments of moral approval and disapproval are based on the strongest and most vigorous passions of human nature; and though they may be somewhat warped ·by custom and fashion·, they can't be entirely perverted.

However, the influence of custom and fashion on moral sentiments is •similar in kind to their influence everywhere else; it is merely •different in strength. When custom and fashion coincide with the natural principles of right and wrong, they heighten the delicacy of our sentiments [Smith's words] and increase our loathing for everything that approximates to evil. Someone who has been brought up in really good company—not what is commonly *called* 'good company'—will have become used to seeing in the people he lived with nothing but justice, modesty, humaneness, and good order. Because of his upbringing, he will be more shocked ·than the rest of us are· by anything that seems to be inconsistent with the rules that those virtues of modesty etc. prescribe. And someone who has had the misfortune to be brought up amidst violence, licentiousness, falsehood, and injustice may still have some sense of the impropriety of such conduct, but he won't have any all sense of *how* dreadful it is, or of the vengeance and punishment that it deserves. He has been familiarized with it from his infancy, custom has made it habitual to him, and he's apt to regard it as 'the way of the world', as it is called—something that may, or even something that *should*, be practised so as to stop us from being the dupes of our own integrity [Smith's wording].

[Smith says that a certain degree of disorder can he liked because it is fashionable, and that fashion can lead to people's disliking qualities that deserve to be respected. He cites the reign of Charles II as a time when a degree of licentiousness was connected in people's minds with various virtues, and was taken to show that the licentious person 'was a gentleman, not a puritan'. He describes with colourful indignation the upside-down morality that arises from this kind of fashion. Then:]

Men in different professions and states of life naturally come to have different characters and manners, because of differences in the kinds of objects they have been used to and the passions that they have formed. We expect each man to behave somewhat in the way that experience has taught us belong to his rank or profession;. . . .and we'll be especially pleased if he has neither too much nor too little of the character that usually accompanies his particular 'species' (if I may use the word in that way). A man, we say, should look like his trade and profession; but the pedantry [= 'excessive attention to correctness of details'] of every profession is disagreeable. The different periods of life have different manners assigned to them, for the same reason. We expect in old age the gravity and calm that its infirmities, its long experience, and its worn-out sensibility seem to make natural and respectworthy; and we expect to find in youth the sensibility, gaiety and sprightly vivacity that experience teaches us to expect from the lively impressions that objects are apt to make on the unpractised senses of the young. But each of those two ages can easily have too much of its special features. The flirting levity of youth, and the immovable insensibility of old age, are equally disagreeable. The young (as the saying goes) are most agreeable when their behaviour has something of the manners of the old, and the old are most agreeable when they retain something of the gaiety of the young. But either of them could go too far: the extreme coldness and dull formality that are pardoned in old age make youth ridiculous; and the levity, carelessness, and vanity that are permitted to the young make old age contemptible.

The special character and manners that custom leads us to associate with a given rank or profession may sometimes have a propriety independent of custom; they are the character and manners that we would approve of for their own sakes if we took into consideration all the different circumstances that naturally affect those in each 'species'. [Smith goes on about this, with some 'very obvious' reflections, such as: our approval of someone's passion

regarding something depends in part on *what else* the person's situation involves. We don't blame a mother who expresses, over the death of her soldier son, a level of grief that would be inexcusable in a general at the head of an army, who has so much else on his plate. We disapprove of levity or casualness in the manner of a preacher 'whose special occupation it is to •keep the world in mind of the awe-inspiring after-life that awaits them, and to •announce what may be the fatal consequences of every deviation from the rules of duty'.]

The basis for the customary character of some other professions is not so obvious, and our approval of it is based entirely on habit, without being confirmed or enlivened by any thoughts of the kind I have been discussing. For example, custom leads us to associate the character of gaiety, levity, and sprightly freedom, as well as of some degree of dissipation, to the military profession. But if we thought about what mood or tone of temper would be most suitable to a soldier's situation, we would be apt to conclude that a serious and thoughtful cast of mind would be the most appropriate for men whose lives are continually exposed to uncommon danger. [Smith develops this thought, and suggests that the levity of serving soldiers may be their way of coping with their dangerous situation, 'losing their anxiety' about it. He offers evidence for that hypothesis:] Whenever an officer has no reason to think he is faced with any uncommon danger, he is apt to lose the gaiety and dissipated thoughtlessness of his character. The captain of a city guard is usually as sober, careful, and penny-pinching as the rest of his fellow-citizens!. . . .

The different situations of different times and countries are apt to give different characters to the general run of people who live in them; and their sentiments regarding what *degree* of this or that quality is either blameworthy or praiseworthy vary according to the degree that is usually blamed or praised in their own country at their own time. A degree of politeness that would be regarded as rude and barbaric at the court of France might be highly esteemed in Russia—unless it was condemned there as effeminate! The degree of order and frugality that would be regarded in a Polish nobleman as •excessive parsimony would be regarded as •extravagance in a citizen of Amsterdam. . . .

Among civilized nations, the virtues that are based on humaneness are cultivated more than the ones based on selfdenial and the command of the passions. Among rude and barbarous nations it is quite otherwise: in them

the virtues of self-denial are more cultivated than those of humaneness. The general security and happiness that prevail at times of civic-mindedness and highly developed society don't call for contempt of danger, or patience in enduring labour, hunger, and pain. Because poverty can easily be avoided, disregard for it almost ceases to be a virtue. . . .

Among savages and barbarians it is quite otherwise. [Smith now launches on three harrowing pages about how 'savages and barbarians'—he mentions in particular 'the savages in North America'—have a value-system that is shaped by the hardships and necessities of their situation. One example: arranged marriages; sexual activity between spouses conducted in secret; no expressions of affection. Then the main example: a régime of discipline to enable any young savage to be able to preserve calm equanimity under threat of death and during horrible tortures (Smith gives details). The closing passage on this theme is notable. [In it, 'magnanimity' means 'courage and calmness in the face of danger'. The second occurrence of 'contempt' means what we mean by the word, but the first occurrence means 'disregard' or 'refusal to treat as important'. The passage is an explosion of Smith's rage at the thought of savage 'heroes' being ill-treated by slave-traders (and their hirelings) who are garbage from the jails.] Smith continues:] The same contempt for death and torture prevails in all the other savage nations. There's not a negro from the coast of Africa who doesn't in this respect have a degree of magnanimity that the soul of his sordid master is too often hardly able to conceive of. Fortune never used her dominance of mankind more cruelly than when she subjected those nations of heroes to the sweepings of the jails of Europe, to wretches who don't have the virtues of the countries they come from or of the ones they go to—wretches whose levity, brutality, and baseness so deservedly expose them to the contempt of the vanquished.

This heroic and unconquerable firmness. . . .is not required from those who are brought up to live in civilized societies. If *they* complain when they are in pain, grieve when they are in distress, allow themselves to be overcome by love or ruffled by anger, they are easily pardoned. Such weaknesses are not seen as affecting the essential parts of their character. As long as they don't do anything contrary to justice or humaneness, they lose little reputation, even if the serenity of their countenance or the calmness of their discourse and behaviour is somewhat disturbed. A humane and polished people, who have more sensitivity to the passions of others, can more easily sympathize with animated and passionate behaviour, and can

more easily pardon any slight excess of it. The person principally concerned is aware of this,. . . .and is accordingly less afraid of exposing himself to others' contempt by the violence of his emotions. [Smith goes on about differences in conversational style between civilised people and barbarians, and also about how some European nations differ in this respect, the French and Italians being much more lively than people with 'duller sensibility' such as the English. He reports one writer who said that 'an Italian expresses more emotion on being sentenced to a fine of twenty shillings than an Englishman on receiving a sentence of death'. (Smith seems to have an ascending scale of polish and civilisedness, and a corresponding scale of increasingly expressive and emotional ways of talking and behaving; with 'savages' at the bottom of each scale, the French and Italians at the top, and the English somewhere in between.) He follows this up with examples from ancient Rome. Then:]

This difference gives rise to many others that are equally essential ·as national characteristics·. A polished people, being accustomed to giving way somewhat to their natural feelings, become frank, open, and sincere. Whereas barbarians, being obliged to smother and conceal the appearance of every passion, inevitably acquire the habits of falsehood and pretence. Everyone who has had any dealings with savage nations—whether in Asia, Africa, or America—has found them equally impenetrable, finding that when they want to conceal the truth there's no way of getting it out of them. They can't be tricked by artful questions, and not even torture can get them to tell anything that they don't want to tell. But the passions of a savage, though never expressed by any outward emotional display and always hidden in the person's breast, rise to the highest pitch of fury. Though the savage seldom shows any symptoms of anger, his vengeance—when he gets to it—is always bloody and dreadful. The least insult drives him to despair. His countenance and discourse remain sober and calm, expressing nothing but the most perfect tranquillity of mind; but his actions are often furious and violent. Among the North-Americans it is not uncommon for girls to drown themselves after receiving only a slight reprimand from their mothers, doing this without expressing any passion or indeed saying anything except 'You shall no longer have a daughter'. In civilized nations the passions of men are not usually so furious or so desperate. They are often noisy, but are seldom very harmful; and they seem often to have no

purpose except to convince the spectator that they are in the right to be so much moved, thereby getting his sympathy and approval.

All these effects of custom and fashion on the moral sentiments of mankind are minor in comparison to some of their other effects. Where custom and fashion produce the greatest perversion of judgment is not in connection with the •general style of character and behaviour (·which is what I have been discussing·) but in connection with the propriety or impropriety of •particular usages.

The different manners that custom teaches us to approve of in the different professions and states of life don't concern things of the greatest importance. We expect truth and justice from an old man as well as from a young, from a clergyman as well as from an officer; and it's only in minor matters that we look for the distinguishing marks of their respective characters [meaning: the characteristics that are typical of them as old, as young, as clergyman, as officer]. Also, the character that custom has taught us to ascribe to a given profession may be *proper*, independently of custom, because of details that we haven't noticed. So these matters don't involve any *large* perversion of natural sentiment. What the manners of different nations require in a character that they think worthy of esteem are different degrees of the same quality, ·but there's nothing bad about that·. The worst that it can be said to involve is that the duties of •one virtue are sometimes extended so as to encroach a little on the territory of •some other. The rustic hospitality that is in fashion among the Poles may perhaps encroach a little on economy and good order; and the frugality that is esteemed in Holland may encroach on generosity and goodfellowship. The hardiness demanded of savages diminishes their humaneness; and the delicate sensitivity required in civilized nations may sometimes destroy masculine firmness of character. But the style of manners that obtains in any nation is often, on the whole, the one that is most suitable to its situation. Hardiness is the character most suitable to the circumstances of a savage; sensitivity to the circumstances of life in a very civilized society. So even in this area we can't complain that men's moral sentiments are grossly perverted.

Thus, where custom authorises the widest departure from the natural propriety of action is not in the general style of conduct or behaviour, but in regard to particular practices. *That* is where custom's influence is often much more destructive of good morals. It can establish, as ·supposedly·

lawful and blameless, particular actions that shock the plainest principles of right and wrong. ·I shall give just one example of this·.

Can there be greater barbarity than to harm an infant? Its helplessness, its innocence, its likeableness, call forth the compassion even of an enemy; not to spare that tender age is regarded as the most furious effort of an enraged and cruel conqueror. Well, then, what can be the heart of a •parent who could injure a weakness that even a •furious enemy is afraid to violate? Yet the murder of new-born infants was a permitted practice in almost all the states of ·ancient· Greece, even among the polished and civilized Athenians; and whenever the circumstances of the parent made it inconvenient [here = 'difficult and burdensome'] to bring up the child, it could be abandoned to hunger or to wild beasts without attracting blame or censure. This practice probably began in times of the most savage barbarism: men's imaginations were first made familiar with it in that earliest period of society, and the unbroken continuity of the custom hindered them from later seeing how abominable it is. Even today we find that this practice prevails among all savage nations; and in that roughest and lowest state of society it is undoubtedly more excusable than in any other. A savage can have such a lack of food that it isn't possible for him to support both himself and his child; so it's not surprising that in this case he abandons it. . . . In the latter ages of ·ancient· Greece, however, the same thing—·leaving babies out in the wilds, to starve or be eaten by wild animals·—was permitted on the grounds of *minor* interest or convenience which could by no means excuse it. Uninterrupted custom had by this time so thoroughly authorised the practice that it was tolerated not only •by the loose maxims of the world but even •by the doctrines of philosophers, which ought to have been more just and precise. . . . Aristotle talks of it as though he thought that the authorities ought often to encourage it. The humane Plato is of the same opinion, and —despite all the love of mankind that seems to animate all his writings—he never expresses disapproval of this practice. When custom can give sanction to such a dreadful violation of humanity, we can well imagine that hardly any particular practice is so gross that custom couldn't authorise it. We constantly hear men saying 'It's commonly done', apparently thinking that this a sufficient excuse for something that is in itself the most unjust and unreasonable conduct.

There's an obvious reason why custom never perverts our sentiments with regard to •the general style and character of behaviour in the same

degree as it does with regard to •the propriety or unlawfulness of particular practices. It’s that there never can be any such custom! No society could survive for a moment if in it the usual strain of men’s behaviour was of a piece with the horrible practice I have been discussing.

Part VI: The character of virtue

Section 1: Prudence, i.e. the character of the individual in its bearing on his own happiness
Section 2: The character of the individual in its bearing on the happiness of other people
- Chapter 1: The order in which individuals are recommended by nature to our care and attention
- Chapter 2: The order in which societies are recommended by nature to our beneficence
- Chapter 3: Universal benevolence

Section 3: Self-control

When we consider the character of any individual, we naturally view it under two different aspects: •as it may affect his own happiness (the topic of Section 1) and •as it may affect that of other people (the topic of Section 2).

Section 1: Prudence, i.e. the character of the individual in its bearing on his own happiness

What Nature first recommends to the care of every individual, it seems, is the preservation and healthful state of his body. The appetites of hunger and thirst, the agreeable or disagreeable sensations of pleasure and pain, of heat and cold, etc. can be considered as lessons given by Nature in her own voice, telling him what he ought to choose for this purpose and what he ought to avoid. The first lessons he learns from those who care for him in his childhood are mostly aimed the same way: their main purpose is to teach him how to keep out of harm's way.

As he grows up, he soon learns that some care and foresight are needed if he is to satisfy those natural appetites, to procure pleasure and avoid pain, to procure agreeable temperatures and avoid disagreeable heat and cold. The art of preserving and increasing what is called his external fortune consists in the proper direction of this care and foresight. [To increase one's 'external fortune' is to become more prosperous (in money, property, land etc.). There is an 'art' of doing this, in Smith's sense, simply because doing it requires skill in the mastery of techniques.]

The *basic* advantage of external fortune is that it enables one to provide the necessities and conveniences of the body, but we can't live long in the world without noticing that the respect of our equals, our credit and rank in the society we live in, depend very much on how large an external fortune we possess, or are supposed to possess. The wish to become proper objects of this respect, to deserve and obtain this credit and rank among our equals, may be the strongest of all our desires; so that our anxiety to obtain the advantages of fortune is stimulated much more by *this* desire than by the desire to supply all the necessities and conveniences of the body—a desire that is always easily satisfied.

Our rank and credit among our equals *also* depends heavily on something that a virtuous man might wish to be the sole source of them, namely our •character and •conduct, or on the confidence, esteem, and good-will that •these naturally arouse in the people we live with.

The care of the health, the fortune, and the rank and reputation of the individual—these being the items on which his comfort and happiness in this life are supposed principally to depend—is regarded as the proper business of the virtue commonly called 'prudence'.

I have already pointed out that our suffering when we fall from a better to a worse situation is greater than any enjoyment we get in rising from a worse to a better. For that reason, the first and the principal object of prudence is *security*. Prudence is opposed to our exposing our health, our fortune, our rank, or our reputation to any sort of risk. It is cautious rather than enterprising, and more concerned to preserve the advantages that we already possess than to prompt us to the acquisition of still greater advantages. The methods of improving our fortune that it principally recommends to us are the ones that don't involve risk: real knowledge and skill in our trade or profession, hard work and persistence in the exercise of it, frugality to the point of parsimony in all our expenses.

The prudent man always makes a serious point of actually understanding whatever he professes to understand, not merely trying persuade other people that he understands it; and though his talents may not always be brilliant they are always perfectly genuine. [Note the connection between what he *professes* to understand and his *profession*.] He doesn't try to impose on you by

> the cunning tricks of an artful impostor,
> the arrogant airs of a pretentious pedant, or
> the confident assertions of a rash and superficial pretender.

He doesn't make a great show even of the abilities that he really does have. His conversation is simple and modest, and he dislikes all the quackish [Smith's word] arts by which other people so often thrust themselves into public notice and reputation. For reputation in his profession he is naturally inclined to rely a good deal on the solidity of his knowledge and abilities; and he doesn't always think of trying to please the little clubs and gangs who, in the superior arts and sciences, set themselves up as the supreme judges of merit, and celebrate one another's talents and virtues while decrying anything that can come into competition with them. . . .

The prudent man is always sincere. He hates the thought of exposing himself to the disgrace that comes from the detection of falsehood. But though always sincere, he isn't always frank and open; he never says anything that isn't true, but he doesn't always think he is obliged to volunteer the whole truth. To match his cautious way of •acting, he is reserved in his •speech, and never forces on people his opinions about anything or anyone.

[The prudent man is always capable of friendship, Smith says, but his friendship (with a few chosen people) is solid and durable rather than ardent

and passionate. He doesn't go in for socializing, because parties and such would interfere too much with his chosen way of life. Also:]

Though his conversation isn't always very sprightly or diverting, it is always perfectly inoffensive. The prudent man hates the thought of being guilty of any petulance or rudeness. . . . In both conduct and conversation he strictly preserves decency and is almost religiously scrupulous in maintaining all the established decorums and ceremonials of society. In this respect he sets a much better example than was set, down through the centuries, by many men with much more splendid talents and virtues than his—from Socrates and Aristippus down to Swift and Voltaire, and from Philip of Macedon and Alexander the Great down to Peter the Great of Russia. These men have too often stood out because of their improper and even insolent contempt for all the ordinary decorums of life and conversation, setting a most pernicious example to anyone wanting to resemble them— followers who too often content themselves with imitating their follies, without even trying to attain their perfections.

The prudent man keeps at his work, and is always frugal, thereby sacrificing the ease and enjoyment of the present moment for the probable expectation of greater ease and enjoyment later on and for a longer time; and in this conduct he is always supported and rewarded by the complete approval of the impartial spectator, and of that spectator's representative, the man within the breast. The impartial spectator doesn't feel *himself* worn out by the present work of the people whose conduct he surveys; nor does he feel *himself* pulled by the loud and persistent demands of their present appetites. To *him* the •present situation ·of those people· is nearly the same as •their likely future situation. He sees •them from nearly the same distance and is affected by them in nearly in the same manner. But he knows that to the people principally concerned—·the ones whose present and future situations are in question·—they're far from being the same, and naturally affect them differently. So he can't help approving—even applauding—the proper exercise of self-control that enables them to act as if their present and their future situation affected •them in nearly the same way that they affect •him.

[Smith now has a paragraph concerning the prudent man's attitude to wealth. He is 'naturally contented with his situation' because he lives within his income. As he gradually becomes wealthier, he can gradually relax his frugality, enjoying modest luxuries both for themselves and for their

contrast with his previous way of life. He doesn't rush, unprepared, into any new enterprises. Also:]

The prudent man isn't willing to undertake any responsibility that his duty does not impose on him. He

- doesn't bustle in matters where he has no concern;
- doesn't meddle in other people's affairs;
- doesn't set himself up as a counsellor or adviser, pushing his advice at people who haven't asked for it.

. . . .He is averse to taking sides in any party disputes, hates faction, and isn't always attentive to the voice of ambition— even of noble and great ambition. He won't refuse to serve his country when clearly called on to do so, but he won't scheme and plot in order to force himself into such service; he would prefer public business to be well managed by someone else. . . .

In short, when prudence aims merely at taking care of the *individual* person's health, fortune, and rank and reputation, though it's regarded as a most respectworthy and even somewhat likeable and agreeable quality, it is never regarded as one the most endearing or ennobling of the virtues. It commands a certain cold esteem, but seems not to be entitled to any ardent love or admiration.

We often label as 'prudence' wise and judicious conduct that is directed to greater and nobler purposes than the care of the health, the fortune, the rank and reputation of the individual. This is a legitimate usage. We talk of the 'prudence' of a great general, a great statesman, a great legislator. In all these cases prudence is combined with many greater and more splendid virtues—valour, extensive and strong benevolence, a sacred regard for the rules of justice, and all these supported by a proper degree of self-control. For this superior ·kind of· prudence to reach the highest degree of perfection it has to involve the art, the talent, and the habit or disposition of acting with the most perfect propriety in every possible situation. [Remember that for Smith 'propriety' means *rightness* in a strong moral sense.] It has to involve the utmost perfection of all the •intellectual and of all the •moral virtues—the best head joined to the best heart, perfect wisdom combined with perfect virtue. [Smith adds that this superior public kind of virtue approximates to the character of a 'sage' according to Aristotle, and that the inferior private kind of virtue approximates to the character of a 'sage' according to the Epicureans.]

Mere imprudence—the mere inability to take care of oneself—is *pitied* by generous and humane people. People with less delicate feelings treat imprudence with •neglect or, at worst, •contempt, but never with •hatred or •indignation. Whereas the infamy and disgrace that accompany other vices are enormously intensified when those vices are combined with imprudence. The rogue whose skill enables him to escape detection and punishment (though not to escape strong suspicion) is too often received in the world with a permissiveness that he doesn't deserve. The awkward and foolish rogue whose lack of skill leads to his being convicted and punished is an object of universal hatred, contempt, and derision. In countries where great crimes often go unpunished, really *atrocious* actions become almost familiar, and stop impressing the people with the kind of horror that everyone feels in countries where the administration of justice is properly carried out. The injustice is the same in both countries, but the level of imprudence may be different. In countries of the latter kind—·the ones with good justice systems·—great crimes are obviously great follies. In countries of the other kind they aren't always seen in that way. In Italy, during most of the sixteenth century, assassinations and murders. . . .seem to have been almost familiar among the upper classes. Cesare Borgia invited four of the little princes in his neighbourhood—all with little kingdoms and their own little armies—to a friendly conference in Senigaglia; and as soon as they arrived there he put them all to death. Although this dreadful action wasn't approved of, even in that age of crimes, it doesn't seem to have contributed much to the discredit of the perpetrator, and contributed nothing towards his ruin. . . . The violence and injustice of •great conquerors are often regarded with foolish wonder and admiration; the violence and injustice of •minor thieves, robbers, and murderers are always regarded with contempt, hatred and even horror. . . . The injustice of the •former is certainly at least as great as that of the •latter, but their folly and imprudence are nowhere near as great. A wicked and worthless man who is clever and skillful often goes through the world with much more credit than he deserves. A wicked and worthless fool always appears to be the most hateful, as well as the most contemptible, of mortals. Just as prudence combined with other virtues constitutes the noblest of all characters, imprudence combined with other vices constitutes the vilest.

Section 2: The character of the individual in its bearing on the happiness of other people

Introduction

The character of any individual can affect the happiness of other people only through its disposition either to harm them or to benefit them.

The •only motive that the impartial spectator can justify for our harming or in any way disturbing the happiness of our neighbour is •proper resentment for injustice attempted or actually committed. To harm someone from any other motive is itself a violation of the laws of justice—the sort of thing that should be restrained or punished by force. The wisdom of every state or commonwealth does its best to use the force of the society to restrain its subjects from harming or disturbing one another's happiness. The rules it establishes for this purpose constitute the civil and criminal law of that state or country. The principles on which those rules are—or *ought to be*—based are the subject of one particular science, by far the •most important of all the sciences though until now perhaps the •least cultivated. I am talking about the science of natural jurisprudence. My present topic doesn't require me to go into this in any detail. A sacred and religious regard not to harm or disturb our neighbour's happiness in any way, even over something for which no law can properly protect him, constitutes the character of the perfectly innocent and just man. [Smith uses 'sacred' (often) and 'religious' (occasionally) with no religious meaning, as we have just seen him do. His topic is simply strict, scrupulous, careful obedience to a rule. Here he said that for anyone who thinks that the rule is a law of God, it acquires a 'new sacredness'.] Whenever someone has this character to the point of being *really careful* not to harm or disturb his neighbour, the character is highly respectworthy and even venerable for its own sake, and is nearly always accompanied by many other virtues, with great feeling for other people, humaneness, and benevolence. We all understand this character well enough; it needn't be further explained by me. All I'm going to attempt in the present section is to explain the basis for the *order* that Nature seems to have marked out for the direction and employment of our limited powers of beneficence—towards individuals (Chapter 1) and towards societies (Chapter 2). [Smith often uses 'order' to mean 'organisation' etc., but his present topic is the down-to-earth sense of 'order' that concerns who or what comes first, second etc. in the queue.]

It will turn out that the same unerring wisdom that regulates every other part of Nature's conduct also governs the ordering of her recommendations that we attend to potential beneficiaries. The more a particular benefaction is needed, the more useful it can be, the stronger is Nature's recommendation that we make it.

Chapter 1: The order in which individuals are recommended by nature to our care and attention

Every man, as the Stoics used to say, is first and principally recommended ·by Nature· to care for himself; and every man is indeed in every way fitter and abler to take care of himself than to take care of anyone else. Every man feels •his own pleasures and his own pains more intensely [Smith says 'sensibly'] than •those of other people, feels •the original sensations more intensely than •the reflected or sympathetic images of those sensations, feels •the substance more intensely than •the shadow.

(1) After himself, the members of his own family—his parents, his children, his brothers and sisters—are naturally the objects of his warmest affections. They are naturally the persons on whose happiness or misery his conduct must have the greatest influence. He is more accustomed to sympathizing with them, he knows better how everything is likely to affect them, and he can have a more precise and definite sympathy with them than he can have with most other people. In short, what he feels for •them is a close approximation to what he feels for •himself.

This sympathy and the affections based on it are naturally directed more strongly towards his children than towards his parents, and his tenderness for the children seems generally to be more *active* than his reverence and gratitude towards his parents. In the natural state of things the child, for some time after it comes into the world, depends for its survival entirely on the care of the parent, whereas the parent's survival doesn't naturally depend on the care of the child. In nature's way of looking at things, a child seems to be a more important object than an old man; and it arouses a much livelier and much more universal sympathy. It ought to do so. Everything can be expected or at least hoped for from the child, whereas ordinarily little can be expected or hoped for from the old man. [Smith was 36 years old when he wrote this.] The weakness of childhood draws the affections of ·even· the most brutal and hard-hearted, but the infirmities of old age are objects of contempt and aversion for everyone who isn't virtuous and humane.

Ordinarily an old man dies without being much regretted by anyone, but it's not often that a child can die without breaking someone's heart.

The earliest friendships—the ones that are naturally formed when the heart is most liable to that feeling—are the friendships among brothers and sisters. While they are still living together their being on good terms with one another is necessary for the household's tranquillity and happiness. They can give more pleasure or pain to one another than to most other people. Their situation ·as siblings living together· makes their mutual sympathy utterly important to their common happiness; and by the wisdom of nature that same situation, by obliging them to accommodate to one another, makes that sympathy more habitual and thus more lively, sharp and definite.

[The same holds for •cousins, though less strongly, Smith says. The friendship among siblings is enhanced if their offspring are also on good terms, but the sympathy between cousins is less necessary than between siblings, and 'so it is less habitual and therefore correspondingly weaker'. Between the •children of cousins etc. 'the affection diminishes as the relation grows more remote'.]

What is called 'affection' is really nothing but habitual sympathy. Our concern for the objects of our 'affections'— our desire to promote their happiness or prevent their misery—is either the actual feeling of that habitual sympathy or a necessary consequences of it. Relatives are usually placed in situations that naturally create this habitual sympathy, so a suitable degree of affection is expected to hold among them. We generally find that it does indeed hold;. . . .and we're shocked whenever we find that it doesn't. The established general rule says that persons related to one another in a certain degree ought always to have mutual affections of a certain kind, and whenever they don't there is the highest impropriety, and sometimes even a sort of impiety. A parent without parental tenderness, a child devoid of all filial reverence, appear to be monsters—objects not only of hatred but of horror.

Sometimes the circumstances that usually produce those 'natural affections' happen not to have existed; but even in those cases the general rule will often make up for that to some extent, producing something that at least is *like* those affections. A father is apt to be less attached to a child who for some reason was separated from him in its infancy and returns to him only as an adult. The father is apt to feel less paternal tenderness for the

child, and the child less filial reverence for the father. When siblings are brought up in distant countries they are apt to feel a similar lessening of affection; but if they are dutiful and virtuous, their respect for the general rule will often produce, again, something that at least is *like* those natural affections. Even during their separation, the father and the child, the brothers and the sisters, are by no means indifferent to one another. They consider one another as persons to and from whom certain affections are due, and they hope some day to be in a position to enjoy the friendship that ought naturally to have taken place among such close relatives. Until they meet, the absent son or brother is often the favourite son or brother. He has never offended, or he offended so long ago that the offence is forgotten—a childish prank not worth remembering. . . . When they meet, it is often with a strong disposition to have the habitual sympathy that constitutes family affection—so strong that they're apt •to imagine they actually *have* that sympathy and •to behave to one another as if they had. But I'm afraid that in many cases time and experience undeceive them. On coming to know one another better, they often turn out to have habits, moods, and inclinations that are different from what the others expected; and they can't easily adjust to these because of the lack of the *habitual* sympathy that is the basis and driving force of 'family affection' properly so-called. . . .

Anyway, it is only with dutiful and virtuous people that the general rule has even this slender authority. People who are dissipated, profligate or vain will disregard the rule entirely. They will be so far from respecting it that they'll seldom talk of it except with indecent derision; and an early and long separation of this kind always completely estranges them from one another. With such persons, respect for the general rule can at best produce only a cold and affected civility (a faint copy of real regard), and even this is commonly abolished by a slight offence, a tiny conflict of interests.

The education of boys at distant great schools, of young men at distant colleges, of young ladies in distant nunneries and boarding-schools, seems in the higher ranks of society to have done crucial harm to domestic morals and thus to domestic happiness, both in France and in England. Do you want to bring up your children to be dutiful to their parents, kind and affectionate to their brothers and sisters? Then bring them up in your own home—make it *necessary* for them to be dutiful children, kind and affectionate brothers and sisters! From their parents' house the children may, with propriety and advantage, go out every day to attend public

schools; but let them continue to live at home. That way of bringing up a child is the institution of nature; education away from home at a boarding school is a contrivance of man. You don't need me to tell you which is likely to be wiser!

[Smith's next three paragraphs make these points: •In 'tragedies and romances' we meet stories about people who are drawn to one another because they are blood-related, though they don't know that they are; but this never happens in real life. •In 'countries where the authority of law is not alone sufficient to give perfect security to everyone', the different branches of a growing extended family often choose to live close to one another; and that gives any two of them a weakened version of the kind of connection most of us have with members of our more immediate family. •In countries where the authority of law is enough to protect everyone, as families grow they spread and scatter, and the parts of them stop mattering to one another.]

I regard natural affection (as they call it) as an effect of the moral connection between the parent and the child more than of the supposed physical connection. [The 'moral connection' is the fact that the parent and child live together.] ·But sometimes a belief about physical connection outweighs the actual facts about moral connection·. A jealous husband, despite the moral connection—despite the child's having been brought up in his own house—often hates the unhappy child whom he supposes to be the offspring of his wife's infidelity. . . .

Among well-disposed people who need ·in their occupations· to accommodate themselves to one another there often comes to be a friendship not unlike what holds between those who are born to live in the same household. Colleagues in office, partners in trade, call one another 'brothers', and often feel towards one another as if they really were so. . . .

Even the trivial fact of living in the same neighbourhood has some effect of the same kind. We respect the face of a man whom we see every day, provided he has never offended us. Neighbours can be convenient to one another, and they can also be troublesome. If they are a good sort of people they are naturally disposed to agree. . . . So there are certain small favours that everyone agrees are due to a neighbour in preference to anyone who has no such connection.

This natural disposition to do our best to make our own sentiments, principles, and feelings fit with the sentiments etc. that we see fixed and

rooted in persons whom we are obliged to live and converse with is the cause of the contagious effects of both good and bad company. A man who associates chiefly with the wise and the virtuous, though he may not become either wise or virtuous himself, can't help acquiring at least a certain respect for wisdom and virtue; and one who associates chiefly with profligate and dissolute people, though he may not become profligate and dissolute himself, must soon at least lose all his original loathing of profligacy and dissoluteness. This same disposition may contribute something to the similarity of family characters that we often see transmitted through several generations; but the family character seems not to come only from the moral connection but also in part from the physical connection—which is of course the sole cause of the family face.

(2) But by far the most respectworthy of all attachments to an individual is the one that is wholly based on respect and approval of what he does and how he does it, confirmed by much experience and long acquaintance. The sympathy that underlies such friendships isn't •constrained—it isn't a sympathy that has been assumed and made habitual for the sake of convenience and getting along together. It is a •natural sympathy that comes from an involuntary feeling that the persons we choose as friends are natural and proper objects of respect and approval. Such friendship is possible only between men of virtue. Only *they* can feel the entire confidence in one another's conduct that gives them a guarantee that they will never offend or be offended by one another. Vice is always capricious; it's only virtue that is regular and orderly. The attachment that is based on the love of virtue is the •happiest of all attachments as well as the most •permanent and secure. Such friendships needn't be confined to a single person; they can safely include *all* the wise and virtuous people whose wisdom and virtue we can wholly depend on because we have seen them from close up for a long period of time. Those who want to confine friendship to two persons seem to be confusing •the wise security of friendship with •the jealousy and folly of love. The hasty and foolish intimacies of young people are often based on

- •some slight similarity of character, quite unconnected with good conduct, on
- •a taste for the same studies, the same amusements, the same diversions, or on
- •their sharing some special opinion that isn't widely held.

These intimacies that begin from a whim and are ended by another whim, however agreeable they may appear while they last, come nowhere near to deserving the sacred and venerable name of 'friendship'.

(3) Of all the persons whom nature points out for our special beneficence, however, there are none to whom it seems more properly directed than those who have already been our benefactors. Nature, which formed men for a mutual kindness that is necessary for their happiness, makes every man the special object of the kindness of people to whom he himself has been kind. Even when the beneficiaries' gratitude doesn't correspond to what their benefactor has done for them, the sense of his merit—the sympathetic gratitude of the impartial spectator—will always correspond to it. And sometimes the general sense of someone's merit can be increased by people's indignation over the ingratitude of his beneficiaries. No benevolent man ever lost altogether the fruits of his benevolence. If he doesn't always gather them from the persons from whom they *ought* to have come, he nearly always gathers them, and with a tenfold increase, from other people. Kindness is the parent of kindness; and if the great object of our ambition is to be beloved by our brethren, the surest way of obtaining it is to show by our conduct that we really love them.

After the persons who are recommended to our beneficence by **(1)** their connection with ourselves, by **(2)** their personal qualities, or by **(3)** their past services, come **(4)** those whom nature points out to us not for •friendship with us but for •our benevolent attention. What picks these people out is ·not any special intrinsic qualities that they have, but· their special situation: they are •greatly fortunate or •greatly unfortunate—•rich and powerful •or poor and wretched. [In what follows, the phrases 'the distinction of ranks' and 'the peace and order of society' are Smith's.]

- •The distinction of ranks, the peace and order of society, are *largely* based on the respect that we naturally have for the rich and powerful.
- •The relief and consolation of human misery depend *altogether* on our compassion for the poor and wretched.

The peace and order of society is more important than even the relief of the miserable. So our respect for the great is most apt to offend by going too far, while our fellow-feeling for the miserable is more apt to offend by not going far enough. Moralists urge us to exhibit charity and compassion, and warn us against the fascination of greatness. It's true that this fascination ·can easily be overdone·: it is so powerful that **(4)** the rich and great are too

often preferred to **(2)** the wise and virtuous. Nature has wisely judged that •plain and obvious differences of birth and fortune provide a more stable basis for the distinction of ranks, the peace and order of society, than would the •invisible and often uncertain differences of wisdom and virtue. The undiscriminating eyes of the great mob of mankind can see the differences of birth and fortune well enough, whereas difference of wisdom and virtue —well, even those who are wise and virtuous sometimes have trouble distinguishing them! In the order of all these recommendations, the benevolent wisdom of nature is equally evident. . . .

Those different beneficent feelings sometimes pull in different directions, and we don't—perhaps we *can't*—have any precise rules to settle which way we should go in a given case. When should **(2)** friendship give way to **(3)** gratitude, or gratitude to friendship? When should **(1)** the strongest of all natural affections give way to a regard for **(4)** the safety of superiors on whose safety the welfare of the whole society depends, and when can that choice go the other way without impropriety? Such questions must be left altogether to the decision of the man within the breast, the supposed impartial spectator, the great judge and arbiter of our conduct. If we place ourselves completely in his situation, if we *really* view ourselves with his eyes, and listen with diligent and reverential attention to what he suggests to us, his voice will never deceive us. We shan't need any applied-ethics rules to direct our conduct. . . .

Chapter 2: The order in which societies are recommended by nature to our beneficence

The motivational forces that direct the order in which •individuals are ·naturally· recommended to our beneficence also direct the order in which •societies are recommended to it. The ones that we find it natural to attend to first are those that are or may be of most importance ·to us·.

•The state in which we have been born and brought up, and under the protection of which we continue to live, is ordinarily the biggest society on whose happiness (or misery) our good (or bad) conduct can have much influence. So fittingly •it's the one that nature most strongly recommends to us. Not only we ourselves but all the people we care about most—our children, our parents, our relatives, our friends, our benefactors, *all* those whom we naturally love and revere the most—are usually included within •it, and their prosperity and safety depend to some extent on its prosperity and safety. So nature makes it dear to us not only through all our selfish

feelings but also through all our private benevolent feelings. On account of our own connection with it, its prosperity and glory seem to reflect some sort of honour on ourselves. When we compare our society with others of the same kind, we are proud of its superiority and are somewhat humiliated if it seems to be in any way below them. All the illustrious characters that it has produced in former times. . . .—its warriors, statesmen, poets, philosophers, and writers of all kinds—we're inclined to view with the most partial [opposite of 'impartial'] admiration, and to rank (sometimes quite wrongly) above those of all other nations. The patriot who lays down his life for the safety of this society—or even for its vain-glory!—appears to do precisely the right thing. He appears to view himself in the way the impartial spectator has to view him, as merely one of the multitude, of no more importance than any of the others, and as bound at all times to sacrifice and devote himself to the safety, the service, and even the glory of the greater number. Although this sacrifice seems to be perfectly right and proper, we know how hard it is to make it and how few people are capable of making it. So someone who does sacrifice himself in this way arouses not only our entire approval but our highest wonder and admiration; he seems to deserve all the applause that the most heroic virtue can deserve. On the other side, the traitor who in some special situation imagines he can promote his own interests by betraying the interests of his native country appears to be of all villains the most detestable. He is disregarding the judgment of the man within the breast, and shamefully and basely putting himself ahead of all those with whom he has any connection.

Our love for our own nation often disposes us to look with malignant jealousy and envy at the prospering of any neighbouring nation. All nations live in continual dread and suspicion of their neighbours, because there is no independent superior ·to whom they can appeal· to decide their disputes, Each sovereign, not expecting much justice from his neighbours, is inclined to treat them with as little justice as he expects from them. There are laws of nations—rules that independent states claim to think they are obliged to conform to in their dealings with one another—but the regard for those laws is often little more than mere pretence. [Citing an example from ancient Rome, Smith distinguishes •the defensible wish for neighbouring nations not to have too much power from •the coarsely primitive wish for neighbouring nations to fail in every way. Then:] France and England may

each have some reason to fear the other's increase of the naval and military power, but for either of them to envy

> the internal happiness and prosperity of the other, the cultivation of its lands, the advancement of its manufactures, the increase of its commerce, the security and number of its ports and harbours, its proficiency in all the liberal arts and sciences,

is surely beneath the dignity of two such great nations. Those are all real improvements of the world we live in. . . . They all proper objects of national emulation, not of national prejudice or envy. [To 'emulate' something is to *try to* copy it.]

The love for our own country seems not to come from love for mankind —and indeed sometimes seems to dispose us to act in ways that are inconsistent with a love for mankind. France has nearly three times the population of Great Britain, so that within the great society of mankind France's prosperity should appear to be much more important than Great Britain's. Yet a British subject who took that view and accordingly always preferred France's prosperity to Great Britain's would *not* be thought a good citizen of Great Britain. We don't love our country merely as a part of the great society of mankind; we love it for its own sake, and independently of any thoughts about mankind in general. The wisdom that designed the system of human affections, as well as the system of every other part of nature, seems to have thought that the best way to further the interests of the great society of mankind would be for each individual to attend primarily to the particular portion of it that lies most within the sphere both of his abilities and of his understanding.

National prejudices and hatreds seldom extend beyond neighbouring nations. We may weakly and foolishly call the French our 'natural enemies', and it may be that they, equally weakly and foolishly, think the same about us. Neither they nor we have any sort of envy for the prosperity of China or Japan, though we can't often employ our good-will towards such distant countries in any way that does them much good.

The most extensive public benevolence that can commonly be exercised to good effect is that of statesmen who plan and create alliances among neighbouring or nearneighbouring nations, for the preservation of the so-called 'balance of power' or of the general peace and tranquillity of the states that are involved. Yet the statesmen who plan and implement such treaties are seldom *aiming at* anything but the interest of their respective

countries; though sometimes they are looking wider than that. [Smith suggests some historical examples.]

Every independent state is divided into many different orders and societies, each of which has its own particular powers, privileges, and immunities. Every individual is naturally more attached to his own particular order or society than to any other. His own interests, his own vanity, the interests and vanity of many of his friends and companions, commonly have a lot to do with this: he is ambitious to extend this group's privileges and immunities, and is zealous to defend them against the encroachments of every other order or society.

What is called the *constitution* of any particular state depends on how that state is divided into the different orders and societies that make it up, and on how powers, privileges, and immunities have been distributed among them.

The *stability* of a state's constitution depends on the ability of each of its particular orders or societies to maintain its own powers, privileges, and immunities against the encroachments of all the others. A particular constitution inevitably undergoes *some* change whenever the rank and condition of any of its subordinate parts goes up or down.

All those different orders and societies depend on the state to which ·they belong, because it's to the state that· they owe their security and protection. Even the most biased member of any one of them will agree to this—i.e. will agree that his order or society is subordinate to the state, and dependent for its existence on the prosperity and preservation of the state as a whole. But it may be hard to convince such a person that the prosperity and preservation of the state requires any lessening of the powers etc. of his own particular order or society. This bias is sometimes unjust, but that doesn't mean that it is useless. It holds back the spirit of innovation, tending to preserve the established balance among the different orders and societies into which the state is divided. While it sometimes appears to obstruct some political changes that may be fashionable and popular at the time, it really helps to make the whole system stable and permanent.

The love of our country ordinarily seems to have two motivational drivers: **(1)** a certain respect and reverence for the constitution or form of government that is actually established; and **(2)** an earnest desire to make our fellow-citizens as safe, respectworthy, and happy as we can. Someone who isn't disposed **(1)** to respect the laws and to obey the lawful authorities

•is not a citizen; and someone who doesn't want to **(2)** do everything he possibly can to promote the welfare of the whole society of his fellow-citizens •is not a *good* citizen. In times of peace those two motivations generally coincide and lead to the same conduct. It seems obvious that the best way of maintaining the safe, respectworthy, and happy situation of our fellow-citizens is to support the established government—when we see that this government *does* maintain them in that situation. But in times of public discontent, faction, and disorder those two motivations can pull in different directions, and even a wise man may be inclined to think that the present government appears plainly unable to maintain public tranquillity and that some change should be made in its constitution or form. In such cases, however, it often needs the highest effort of political wisdom for a real patriot to decide whether to **(1)** support and try to re-establish the authority of the old system or rather **(2)** to go along with the more daring but often dangerous spirit of innovation.

Foreign war and civil faction provide the most splendid opportunities for the display of public spirit. The hero who serves his country successfully in foreign war satisfies the wishes of the whole nation, which makes him an object of universal gratitude and admiration. In times of civil discord, the leaders of the opposing parties may be admired by half their fellow-citizens but are likely to be cursed by the other half. Their characters and the merit of their respective services often seem more doubtful, which is why the glory that is acquired through foreign war is almost always purer and more splendid than any that can be acquired through civil faction.

Yet the leader of the successful party ·in a factional dispute·, if he has enough authority to prevail on his own friends to act with moderation (and often he doesn't!), may be able to serve his country in a much more essential and important way than the greatest victories and the most extensive conquests ·in foreign wars·. . . .

Amidst the turbulence and disorder of faction, •a certain spirit of *system* is apt to mix itself with •the public spirit that is based on the love of humanity, on a real fellow-feeling with the difficulties and distresses to which some of our fellowcitizens are exposed. This spirit of system commonly goes in the same direction as that gentler public spirit, pumping energy into it and often inflaming it even to the madness of fanaticism. Nearly always the leaders of the discontented party display some plausible plan of reformation which, they claim, will not only remove the difficulties

and relieve the distresses immediately complained of, but will prevent anything like them from *ever* occurring again. To this end they propose to rebuild the constitution, altering some of the most essential parts of a system of government under which the subjects of a great empire may have enjoyed peace, security, and even glory through a period of several centuries. The great mass of party-members are commonly intoxicated with the imaginary beauty of this ideal system: they have had no experience of it, but it has been represented to them in the most dazzling colours in which the eloquence of their leaders could paint it. [Calling it 'ideal', Smith means merely that it exists only as an *idea* that someone has.] Many of those leaders themselves, though they may at first have aimed only at a growth of their own personal power, eventually become dupes of their own sophistry, and are as eager for this great reformation as the weakest and stupidest of their followers. There are other leaders who keep their own heads free from this fanaticism, but don't dare to disappoint the expectation of their followers; so they are constantly forced to act as if they were under the common delusion, doing this in defiance of their principles and their conscience. The violence of the party, refusing all offers of reasonable compromise, by requiring too much often gets *nothing*; and difficulties and distresses which with a little moderation might have been considerably removed and relieved are left with absolutely no hope of a remedy.

A man whose public spirit is prompted only by humaneness and benevolence will respect the established powers and privileges of individuals, and even more those of the great orders and societies into which the state is divided. If he regards some of them as somewhat abusive, he'll settle for •moderating things that he often can't •annihilate without great violence. . . . He will do his best to •accommodate public arrangements to the confirmed habits and prejudices of the people, and to •remedy any inconveniences that flow from the lack of regulations that the people are unwilling to submit to. When he can't establish the right, he won't be too proud to ameliorate the wrong. Like Solon, when he can't establish the best system of laws he will try to establish the best that the people can bear.

The man of system is nothing like that. He is apt to be sure of his own wisdom, and is often so in love with the supposed beauty of his own ideal plan of government that he can't allow the slightest deviation from any part of it. He goes on to establish it completely and in detail, paying no attention

to the great interests or the strong prejudices that may oppose it. He seems to imagine that he can arrange the members of a great society as easily as a hand arranges the pieces on a chess-board! He forgets that the chessmen's *only* source of motion is what the hand impresses on them, whereas in the great chess-board of human society every single piece has its own ·private· source of motion, quite different from anything that the legislature might choose to impress on it. If •those two sources coincide and act in the same direction, the game of human society will go on easily and harmoniously, and is likely to be happy and successful. If •they are opposite or different, the game will go on miserably and the society will be in the highest degree of disorder all the time.

The views of a statesman need, no doubt, to be guided by some •general idea of the perfect state of policy and law—perhaps even a •systematic idea of these. But to insist on establishing *everything* that that idea may seem to require, and on establishing it all at once and in spite of all opposition, must often be the highest degree of arrogance. The statesman who does that is holding up his own judgment as the supreme standard of right and wrong. He imagines himself to be the only wise and worthy man in the commonwealth, and thinks that his fellow-citizens should accommodate themselves to him and not he to them. That is why of all political theorists sovereign princes are by far the most dangerous! This arrogance ·that I have just described· is perfectly familiar to them. They have no doubt as to the immense superiority of their own judgment. So when such imperial and royal reformers are graciously willing to give thought to the humdrum topic of the constitution of the country they have to govern, the worst things they see in it are obstructions that the country sometimes sets up against the carrying out of their own will. They. . . .consider the state as made for themselves, not themselves for the state. So the great object of their 'reformation' is to remove those obstructions, to reduce the authority of the nobility, to take away the privileges of cities and provinces, and to bring it about that the greatest individuals *and* the greatest orders of the state are as incapable of opposing their commands as the weakest and most insignificant.

Chapter 3: Universal benevolence

Although our effective *help* can't often be extended to any society wider than that of our own country, our *good-will* isn't hemmed in by any

boundary—it can embrace the universe. We can't form any idea of an innocent and sentient being whom we wouldn't want to be happy. . . . The idea of a mischievous sentient being naturally provokes our hatred; but our hostility to such a being is really an effect of our universal benevolence. It comes from our sympathy for the misery and resentment of the other innocent and sentient beings whose happiness is disturbed by the malice of this one.

This universal benevolence, however noble and generous it may be, can't be the source of any solid happiness for any man who isn't thoroughly convinced that *all* the inhabitants of the universe, low and high, are under the immediate care and protection of the great, benevolent, and all-wise Being who •directs all the movements of nature, and who •is determined [here = 'caused'] by his own unalterable perfections to maintain in it always the greatest possible amount of happiness. To ·someone who has· this universal benevolence the mere *suspicion* of a fatherless world must be the saddest of all thoughts, involving the thought that all the unknown regions of infinite and incomprehensible space may be filled with nothing but endless misery and wretchedness. All the splendour of the highest prosperity can't lighten the gloom that this dreadful idea must necessarily inflict on imagination; just as, in a wise and virtuous man, all the sorrow of the most terrible adversity can't ever dry up the joy that necessarily arises from the habitual and thorough conviction of the truth of the contrary system, ·i.e. the truth of theism·.

The wise and virtuous man is always willing for his own private interest to be sacrificed to the public interest of his own particular order or society. He is always willing, too, for the interests of this order or society to be sacrificed to the greater interests of the state of which it is a subordinate part. So he should be equally willing for all those inferior interests to be sacrificed to the greater interests of the universe—of the great society of all sentient and thinking beings whose immediate administrator and director is God himself. If he *really does believe* that this benevolent and all-wise Being can't allow any partial evil that isn't necessary for the universal good, he must regard all the misfortunes that may happen to himself, his friends, his society, or country as necessary for the prosperity of the universe. This involves believing that not only should he patiently put up with them but also that his attitude should be: 'If I had known all the connections and

dependences of things, I would have sincerely and devoutly wanted all those misfortunes to happen.'

This noble-minded acceptance of the will of the great Director of the universe doesn't seem to be beyond the reach of human nature. Good soldiers who both love and trust their general often march with more alacrity and gaiety •to a **forlorn station** from which they don't expect to return than they would •to one that didn't involve difficulty or danger. [Smith contrasts these as •'the noblest thing a man can do' and •'the dullness of ordinary duty' respectively; and he likens the former of them to what a convinced theist is called upon to do:] No conductor of an army can deserve more unlimited trust. . . .than the great Conductor of the universe. In the greatest disasters a wise man ought to think that he himself, his friends and his countrymen have only been ordered to the **forlorn station** of the universe; that they wouldn't have been so ordered if it hadn't been necessary for the good of the whole; and that it's their duty not only to accept this order humbly but to try to embrace it with alacrity and joy. Surely a wise man should be capable of doing what a good soldier is at all times ready to do.

The idea of

> the divine Being whose benevolence and wisdom have from all eternity directed the immense machine of the universe so as to produce at every moment the greatest possible amount of happiness

is the most sublime thought human beings can have. Every other thought necessarily appears mean in comparison with it. We usually have the highest veneration for anyone whom we believe to be principally occupied with this sublime thought; even if his life is altogether contemplative, we often regard him with a higher kind of religious respect than we have for the most active and useful servant of the commonwealth. The *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, which are mainly devoted to this subject, may have contributed more to the general admiration of his character than everything he did in the course of his just, merciful, and beneficent reign ·as emperor of Rome·.

Still, the administration of the great system of the universe—the care of the universal happiness of all rational and sentient beings—is God's business, not man's. Man is assigned a role that is much humbler but also much more suitable to the limited nature of his powers and his intellect—namely the care of his own happiness and of the happiness of his family, his

friends, his country. A man can’t be excused for neglecting this humbler task on the grounds that he is busy contemplating the more sublime one! Marcus Aurelius was accused, perhaps wrongly, of doing this. It was said that while he was busy with philosophical speculations and thoughts about the welfare of the universe he neglected the welfare of the Roman empire. The most sublime theory-building of the contemplative philosopher can hardly compensate for the neglect of the smallest active duty.

Section 3: Self-control

A man who acts according to the rules of perfect prudence, strict justice, and proper benevolence may be said to be perfectly virtuous. But a complete knowledge of those rules won't, unaided, enable him to act in this manner. His own passions ·play a role in this, and they· are apt to mislead him—sometimes •driving him to violate all the rules that in his sober and cool hours he approves of, and sometimes •seducing him into doing this. The most perfect knowledge won't always enable him to do his duty if it isn't supported by the most perfect self-control.

Some of the best ancient moralists seem to have divided passions into two classes: **(1)** those that can't be restrained, even for a moment, by a considerable exertion of self-control; and **(2)** those that it's easy to restrain for a short period of time, although over the course of a lifetime they are apt to lead us far astray through their continual quiet urgings.

(1) The first class consists of •fear and •anger and some other passions that are mixed or connected with those two. **(2)** The second class contains love of ease, of pleasure, of applause, and of many other selfish satisfactions. Extravagant fear and furious anger are often hard to restrain, even for a moment. As for the love of ease and the others in **(2)**, it's always easy to restrain those for a short period of time; but through their continual urgings they often mislead us into weaknesses that we later have much reason to be ashamed of. We could say that the **(1)** passions •drive us from our duty, whereas the **(2)** passions •seduce us from it. The ancient moralists that I have referred to used the labels 'fortitude', 'manliness', and 'strength of mind' for control over the passions in group (1); and 'temperance', 'decency', 'modesty', and 'moderation' for control over the ones in group **(2)**.

Control of each of those sets of passions has a beauty that comes from its utility—from its enabling us always to act according to the dictates of prudence, of justice, and of proper benevolence. But it also has an ·intrinsic· beauty of its own, and seems to deserve a certain degree of esteem and admiration for its own sake, because of the qualities of the exertion involved in such self-control—its strength and greatness with passions in group **(1)**, and its uniformity, evenness and unflinching steadiness in group **(2)**.

A man who keeps his tranquillity unaltered at a time when he is in danger, or being tortured, or nearing death, and doesn't allow a word or gesture to escape him that doesn't perfectly match the feelings of the most uninvolved spectator, inevitably commands a high degree of admiration from us. [Smith elaborates on this, mentioning great men of the remote past (Socrates) and of the more recent past (Sir Thomas More) who went to their deaths in a calm and dignified manner, and whose great posthumous reputation has derived from this. We even have a certain admiration for a truly wicked man who deserves to be sent to the gallows, if he goes there 'with decency and firmness'.]

War is the great school both for acquiring and for exercising this sort of magnanimity. Death is called the 'king' of terrors; and a man who has conquered his fear of death isn't likely to be thrown off-balance by the approach of any other natural evil. In war, men become familiar with death, and this cures them of the superstitious horror with which death is viewed by weak and inexperienced. They consider it merely as the loss of life, and as an object of aversion only to the extent that life happens to be an object of desire. Also, they learn from experience that many seemingly great dangers are not as great as they appear, and that with courage, energy and presence of mind they often have a good chance of extricating themselves with honour from situations where at first they could see no hope. [Smith elaborates on our admiration for the calmly bold warrior, even one who is fighting on the wrong side in a wicked war.]

Control over anger often seems to be just as generous [see note here] and noble as control over fear. Many of the most admired examples of ancient and modern eloquence have been *proper* expressions of righteous indignation. The speeches of Demosthenes against Philip of Macedonia, and Cicero's speeches against Catiline, derive all their beauty from the noble propriety with which indignation is expressed in them. And this just indignation is simply anger restrained and properly damped down to something that the impartial spectator can enter into. The blustering and noisy passion that goes beyond this is always odious and offensive, and it draws us in not on the side of the angry man but on the side of the man he is angry with. The nobleness of pardoning often seems better than even the most perfect propriety of resenting. When

- the offending party has properly acknowledged what he did, or even without that when

•the public interest requires that mortal enemies should unite to carry out some important duty,

the man who sets aside all animosity and acts with confidence and cordiality towards the person who has most grievously offended him seems to be entitled to our highest admiration.

But the command of anger doesn't always appear in such splendid colours. Fear is contrary to anger, and is often the motive that restrains it; and in such cases the lowness of the motive takes away the nobleness of the restraint. Anger prompts us to attack, and giving way to it seems sometimes to show a sort of courage and superiority to fear. People sometimes take pride in having acted on their anger; no-one takes pride in having acted out of fear!. . . .

Acting according to the dictates of prudence, justice, and proper beneficence seems to have no great merit when there's no temptation to do otherwise. But

•acting with cool deliberation in the midst of the greatest dangers and difficulties,

•observing religiously the sacred rules of justice, in spite of being tempted by self-interest and provoked by great injuries to violate them; and

•never allowing the benevolence of our temperament to be damped or discouraged by malignity and ingratitude on the part of some beneficiaries,

is the character of the most exalted wisdom and virtue. Self-control is not only itself a great virtue, but it seems to be the source of most of the *glow* of all the other virtues.

Control over one's fear and over one's anger are always great and noble powers; and when they're directed by justice and benevolence they increase the splendour of those other virtues as well as being great virtues themselves. But when they are directed by other motives they can be (though still great and respectworthy) excessively dangerous. [Calm self-control in the deceitful pursuit of really bad objectives has sometimes been admired by people with good judgment, Smith says; and he cites examples, ancient and modern. Then:] This character of dark and deep dissimulation occurs most commonly in times of great public disorder, in the violence of faction and civil war. When the law has become largely powerless, when perfect innocence can't guarantee safety, a concern for self-defence obliges

most men to resort to dexterity, to skill, and to *apparent* agreement with whatever party happens to be uppermost at the moment. This false character is also often accompanied by cool and determined courage, which is needed because being detected in such a deception often leads to death. . . .

Control over one's less violent and turbulent passions seems less open to being abused for any pernicious purpose. Temperance, decency, modesty, and moderation are always likeable, and can seldom be directed to any bad end. It is from the unremitting steadiness of those gentler exercises of self-control that the likeable virtue of •chastity and the respectworthy virtues of •industry and •frugality derive all the sober *shine* that they have. The conduct of everyone who is content to walk in the humble paths of private and peaceable life has a beauty and grace that are less •dazzling but not always less •pleasing than the beauty and grace of the more splendid actions of the hero, the statesman, or the legislator.

After what I have already said in different parts of this work concerning the nature of self-control, I don't think I need to go into any more detail concerning those virtues. All I'll say now is that the intensity-scale's •point of propriety, the •degree of a passion that the impartial spectator approves of, is differently placed for different passions. **(1)** Of some passions it's better to have too much than to have too little, an excess being less disagreeable than a shortage; and in such passions the point of propriety seems to stand high—i.e. nearer to 'too much' than to 'too little'. **(2)** With other passions a shortage is less disagreeable than an excess; and their point of propriety seems to stand low—i.e. nearer to 'too little' than to 'too much'. The **(1)** passions are the ones the spectator is most disposed to sympathize with, the **(2)** the ones he is least likely to sympathize with. Also, the **(1)** passions are the ones that *feel* good to the person who has the passion, and the **(2)** passions are the ones that feel bad to the person who has them. So out of this we get a general rule:

> **(1)** The passions that the spectator is most disposed to sympathize with, and that have a correspondingly high point of propriety, are the ones that feel good to the person who has them; and
>
> **(2)** the passions that the spectator is least disposed to sympathize with, and that have a correspondingly low point of propriety, are the ones that feel disagreeable to the person who has them.

I haven't found a single exception to this general rule. A few examples will sufficiently explain it while also demonstrating its truth. [Smith's 'few examples'

and his comments on them fill the remaining *thirty* book-pages of this section. The present version will reduce the length considerably,]

It's possible for someone to be •too much disposed to have the affections that tend to unite men in society— humaneness, kindness, natural affection, friendship, esteem. [Notice that in that sentence Smith uses 'affections' in the broad sense and 'affection' in the narrow one—see note here.] But even this •excess makes the person interesting to everybody [=, roughly, 'gives us all a concern for him, puts us all on his side, sort of']. We blame him for it, but we still regard it with compassion and even with kindness, and never with dislike. We're sorry rather than angry about it. To the person himself, having such excessive affections is often not only agreeable but delicious. On some occasions, especially when directed towards unworthy objects (as it too often is), it exposes him to much real and heartfelt distress. Even then, though, a well-disposed person will regard him with intense pity, and will be highly indignant with those who despise him as weak and imprudent. As for having •too little disposition to have such feelings—what we call 'hardness of heart'—it makes a man insensitive to the feelings and distresses of other people, while also making them insensitive to *his*. This excludes him from the friendship of all the world, cutting him off from the best and most comfortable of all social enjoyments.

As for the disposition to have the affections that drive men away from one another, tending to break the bands of human society (so to speak)—i.e. the disposition to anger, hatred, envy, malice, revenge—one is more apt to offend by having too much of this disposition than by having too little. Having too much of it makes a man wretched and miserable in his own mind, and draws down on him the hatred, and sometimes even the horror, of other people. It's not often that anyone is complained of for having too little of this disposition, but there *is* such a thing as having too little of it. The lack of proper indignation is a most essential defect in the manly character, and it often makes a man incapable of protecting himself or his friends from insult and injustice. The odious and detestable passion of envy consists in a misdirected excess of a certain motivational drive, and it's possible to have *too little* of that drive. Envy is the passion that views with malignant dislike the greater success of people who are really entitled to all the success they have had. A man who in matters of consequence tamely allows other people who are *not* entitled to any such success to rise above him or get before him is rightly condemned as poor-spirited. This weakness is commonly based on

laziness, sometimes on good nature, on a dislike for confrontation and for bustle and pleading, and sometimes also on a sort of ill-judged magnanimity. [This last basis for poor-spiritedness, Smith says, involves the person's having a dismissive attitude to the advantages that he is passing up, and fancying that he'll be able to keep up this attitude indefinitely. He is apt to be wrong in this belief, and to end up with 'a most malignant envy' and hatred for the success of the others.]

One is more likely to offend by •being too sensitive to personal danger and distress than by •not being sensitive enough to these. (This is similar to being too sensitive or not sensitive enough to personal provocation.) No character is more contemptible than that of a coward; no character is more admired than that of the man who faces death bravely, maintaining his tranquillity and presence of mind amidst the most dreadful dangers. [Smith develops this line of thought, mainly repeating things he has said earlier.]

But although our sensitivity to our own injuries and misfortunes is usually •too strong, it *can* be •too weak. A man who feels little for his own misfortunes will always feel less for those of other people, and be less disposed to relieve them. [And so on, as Smith develops the general theme that a proper care for the welfare of others requires a proper care for one's own interests. The most striking thing here is the description of the internalized impartial spectator as 'the great inmate, the great demi-god within the breast'.]

[Then a paragraph about a moral risk involved in having too fine a sensitivity to personal injury, danger and distress. It's possible to have this and yet behave well, Smith says, because this extreme sensitivity can be controlled by 'the authority of the judge within the breast'. But this may be too fatiguing for the inner judge, giving him 'too much to do'. In such a case, Smith says, there will be a constant inner conflict between (for example) cowardice and conscience, depriving the person of 'internal tranquillity and happiness'. He continues:] A wise man whom Nature has endowed with this too-fine sensitivity, and whose too-lively feelings haven't been sufficiently blunted and hardened by early education and proper exercise, will do whatever he decently can to avoid situations for which he isn't perfectly fitted. . . . A certain boldness, a certain firmness of nerves and hardiness of constitution, whether natural or acquired, are undoubtedly the best preparatives for all the great exercises of self-control. . . .

It is also possible to have too much, or to have too little, sensitivity to the pleasures, amusements and enjoyments of human life. Having too much seems less disagreeable than having too little. A •strong propensity for joy is certainly more pleasing—to the person himself and to the spectator—than a •dull numbness towards objects of amusement and diversion. We are charmed with the gaiety of youth, and even with the playfulness of childhood, but we soon grow weary of the flat and tasteless solemnity that too often accompanies old age. It can happen that a great propensity for joy etc. isn't restrained by a sense of propriety—is unsuitable to the time or the place, or to the age or the situation of the person—so that in giving way to it the person is neglecting his interests or his duty; and when that happens, the propensity is rightly blamed as excessive, and as harmful both to the individual and to the society. But in most of these cases the chief fault is not so much the strength of the propensity for joy as the weakness of the sense of propriety and duty. . . .

[The twenty-odd book-pages that Smith has ahead of him in this section are entirely devoted to 'self-estimation'—thinking too highly of oneself, not thinking highly enough of oneself, or getting it right.]

One's estimate of oneself may be too high, and it may be too low. It is so agreeable to think highly of ourselves, and so disagreeable to take a low view of ourselves, that for the person himself some degree of over-rating must be much less disagreeable than any degree of under-rating. But it may be thought that things must appear quite differently to the impartial spectator, who must always find under-rating less disagreeable than over-rating. . . .

In estimating our own merit, judging our own character and conduct, there are two different standards to which we naturally compare them. **(1)** One is the idea of *exact propriety and perfection*, so far as each of us can comprehend that idea. **(2)** The other is ·the idea of· *a certain approximation to exact propriety and perfection*—specifically, the degree of perfection etc. that is commonly achieved in the world, the degree that most of our friends and companions, and most of our rivals and competitors, may have actually arrived at. We don't often—I'm inclined to think we don't *ever*—try to judge ourselves without paying some attention to both these standards. But different men distribute their attention between them differently; so indeed does one man at different times.

So far as our attention is directed towards **(1)** the first standard, ·even· the wisest and best of us can see nothing but weakness and imperfection in

his own character and conduct, finding no reason for arrogance and presumption, and plenty of reason for humility, regret and repentance. So far as our attention is directed towards **(2)** the second standard, we may be affected in either way, feeling ourselves to be really above the standard to which we are comparing ourselves, or really below it.

The wise and virtuous man directs his attention mainly to **(1)** the first standard, the idea of exact propriety and perfection. There exists in every man's mind an idea of this kind, gradually formed from his observations on the character and conduct both of himself and of other people. It is slowly and steadily under construction by the great demigod within the breast, the great judge and arbiter of conduct. [Smith writes about how the wise and virtuous man constantly measures himself against this standard, trying to get closer to it in his own character and conduct. But never fully succeeding, because, Smith says, 'he is imitating the work of a divine artist, which can never be equalled'. He may cheer himself up by comparing himself with **(2)** the second standard, 'but he is necessarily much more humbled by **(1)** one comparison than he ever can be elevated by **(2)** the other'. And he won't let the results of **(2)** the second comparison lead him to behave arrogantly or dismissively towards other people.]

In all the liberal and ingenious arts [see note here]— painting, poetry, music, eloquence, philosophy—the great artist always feels the real imperfection of his own best works, and is more aware than anyone else is of how far short they fall of the •ideal perfection of which he has formed some conception. He does what he can to imitate that ideal, but he despairs of ever equalling it. Only the inferior artist is ever perfectly satisfied with his own works. He has little conception of •ideal perfection, and doesn't think about it much. What he mostly compares his works with are the works of other artists, perhaps less good artists than he is. [Smith decorates this point with an anecdote: a great French poet said that no great man is ever completely satisfied with his own works, and an inferior poet replied that *he* was always completely satisfied with *his*! Smith then goes on to say that the situation of an artist in relation to his work is *not* after all a good model of the situation of a good man in relation to his whole life. He handles this point in terms not of **(1)** as a standard by which to *evaluate* one's work or one's life but rather of it as a standard by which to *make* one's works or to *live* one's life:] But to support and finish off (if I may put it that way) the conduct of a whole life to some resemblance to this ideal perfection is

surely much more difficult than to work up to an equal resemblance any of the productions of any of the ingenious arts. The artist sits down to his work undisturbed, at leisure, in the full possession and recollection of all his skill, experience, and knowledge. The wise man must support the propriety of his own conduct in health and in sickness, in success and in disappointment, in the hour of fatigue and drowsy indolence as well as in that of the most awakened attention. The most sudden and unexpected assaults of difficulty and distress must never surprise him. The injustice of other people must never provoke him to injustice. The violence of faction must never confound him. All the hardships and hazards of war must never either dishearten or appal him.

[The next topic is the person who, when he judges himself by **(2)** the second standard—the one set by how well the general run of people are performing—*rightly* thinks that he is 'very much above it'. If this person doesn't attend carefully to **(1)** the ideal standard (and most such people *don't*), he will become arrogant and inappropriately self-admiring, and will often persuade the gullible multitude to take him at his (over-)valuation. This creates for him a kind of 'noisy fame' that may stay with him down the centuries. It may be—Smith allows—that a high-achieving person *needed* this self-overestimation—both to embolden him to embark on his ventures and to get others to join and support him in them. But if he becomes (by worldly standards) extremely successful while still having this unduly high opinion of himself, he may be betrayed into 'a vanity that approaches almost to insanity and folly'. Smith cites the ancient examples of Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar. Intelligent as Caesar was, he says, he *liked* being said to have descended from the goddess Venus; and he was guilty of various instances of 'an almost childish vanity', which may have helped to motivate his assassins. Then:] The religion and manners of modern times don't encourage our great men to think they are gods or even prophets. But the combination of success and popularity has led many of the greatest of them to credit themselves with far more importance and far more ability than they really possess; and this has sometimes pushed them into rash and sometimes ruinous adventures. [The only exception to this in modern times, Smith says, is the great Duke of Marlborough, an enormously successful general who was never undermined by immodesty.]

In the humble projects of private life as well as in the ambitious and proud pursuit of high rank and high office, great ability and success at the

outset often encourage people to tackle projects that are bound to lead to bankruptcy and ruin in the end.

[Smith now embarks on four book-pages of reflection about how self-overestimation figures in the lives and reputations of notably able people who are guilty of it. He repeats at length that it can be an aid to success but can also be a trap, leading the person to ruin himself in one way or another; and he describes in glowing terms the situation of an able person who is truly modest. He speculates on the interplay, in a great man's reputation, between knowledge of his real successes and inflated beliefs about how great he was—e.g. what would Caesar's reputation be *now* if he had lost the battle of Pharsalia? He describes in some detail the disgusting moral depths to which a great man—Alexander the Great—descended because of the weight of his grossly exaggerated idea of who he was. And he also describes a further upshot:] The humble, admiring, and flattering friends whom Alexander left in power and authority at his death divided his empire among themselves, and after having thus robbed his family and kindred of their inheritance, put to death every single surviving member of the family, male and female, one by one.

[The next paragraph leads Smith into one special department of the self-overestimation topic, a department that will be his topic through the remaining ten book-pages of the section:] Faced with the excessive self-estimation of the splendid people in whom we observe a notable superiority above **(2)** the common level of mankind, we don't just •pardon it but often •thoroughly enter into it and sympathize with it. We call such people 'spirited', 'magnanimous', and 'high-minded'—labels that all convey a considerable degree of praise and admiration. But we can't enter into and sympathize with •the excessive self-estimation of people in whom we don't see any such distinguished superiority. We're disgusted and revolted by •it, and we find it hard to forgive and hard to put up with! We call it 'pride', a word that •usually conveys a considerable degree of blame, or 'vanity', a word that •always does so. [This version will use those two words exactly as Smith does, not getting into questions about whether what they meant to him is exactly what they mean to us. (Hume in *Treatise* II treats them as synonyms.)]

Pride and vanity are alike in some ways, because each is a variety of self-overestimation; but in many respects they are different.

The proud man is sincere: he really is thoroughly convinced of his own superiority, though it's not always easy to see what this conviction is based

on. He wants you to view him in just the way he views himself when he looks at himself from your viewpoint. All he demands from you (he thinks) is justice. If you seem not to respect him as he respects himself, he is offended rather than humiliated, and feels the kind of indignant resentment he would feel if you had harmed him in some way. (·He would feel humiliated only if he had a *tentative* high opinion of himself and was looking to you to confirm him in it·.) Even then, he doesn't condescend to explain his reasons for his own conviction of his worth. He is too proud to make an effort to win your esteem. He even acts as though he despises it, and tries to keep his end up by making you aware not of how high he is but of how low you are. He seems to want not so much to arouse your esteem for *him* as to grind down your esteem for yourself.

The vain man is not sincere: he usually isn't convinced, in his heart of hearts, that he really has the superiority that he wants you to ascribe to him. He wants you to view him in much more splendid colours than those in which he can view himself when he places himself in your situation and supposes you to know everything that he knows. So when it seems that you view him in different colours, perhaps in his proper colours, he is humiliated rather than offended. He takes every opportunity to display the grounds for his claim to the character that he wants you to ascribe to him; he does this by ostentatious and unnecessary parades of the good qualities and accomplishments that he does possess in some tolerable degree, and sometimes even by false claims to good qualities that he *doesn't* have, or that he does have but only in such a low degree that he might as well be said not to have them at all. Far from despising your esteem, he anxiously and busily courts it. Far from wishing to grind down your self-estimation, he is happy to accept it, in the hope that you will accept his own in return. He flatters in order to be flattered. He works on pleasing people; and he tries to bribe you into a good opinion of him by politeness and acceptance, and sometimes even by giving real and essential help—though often in an unnecessarily showy manner.

The vain man sees the respect that is paid to rank and fortune, and wants to usurp this respect as well as respect for talents and virtues. So his dress, his art collection, his carriage and horses, his way of living all announce a higher rank and a greater fortune than he really has; and in order to support this foolish deception for a few years early in his life, he often reduces himself to poverty and distress later on. . . . Of all the illusions of vanity this

may be the most common. Obscure strangers visiting foreign countries, or paying a brief visit to the capital of their own country, often try to practise it; and although this is foolish and most unworthy of a man of sense, it isn't quite *as* foolish in these cases as it is on most other occasions. If their visit is short, they may escape any disgraceful detection; and after they have given full play to their vanity for a few months or a few years, they can return home and start living frugally so as to recover from the extravagant spending during the visit.

A proud man is seldom guilty of this folly. His sense of his own dignity makes him careful not to become anyone's dependent; and if his fortune isn't large he will—while wanting to be decent—be carefully frugal and careful in all his expenses. He is offended by the vain man's ostentatious extravagance, which may out-spend his own. It provokes his indignation as an insolent assumption of a rank to which the vain man isn't entitled, and he never talks about it without loading it with the harshest and severest reproaches.

The proud man doesn't always feel at his ease in the company of his equals, let alone his superiors. He can't give up •his lofty claims, and the faces and conversation of such company awe him so much that he doesn't dare to display •them. He resorts to humbler company, for which he has little respect, and which he wouldn't *willingly* choose and doesn't find in the least agreeable—I mean the company of his inferiors, his flatterers, and his dependants. He seldom visits his superiors; and when he does, it's not because he will get any real satisfaction from such a visit, but rather to show that he is *entitled* to keep such people company. As Lord Clarendon says about the Earl of Arundel: he sometimes went to court because that's the only place where he could he could find a greater man than himself, and he seldom went to court because it's a place where he found a greater man than himself!

The vain man is different. He seeks the company of his superiors as much as the proud man shuns it. He seems to think that *their* splendour reflects a splendour onto those who are often in their company. He haunts the courts of kings and the receptions of ministers, and puts on the manner of someone who is •a candidate for fortune and promotion, when really he has the much more precious happiness, if he knew how to enjoy it, of *not* being •one! [Smith adds details about how the vain man treats his superiors, ending with:] . . . often flattery, though mostly pleasant flattery delivered

with a light touch, and seldom the gross and overdone flattery of a parasite. The proud man, on the other hand, never flatters, and is often hardly civil to anybody.

Notwithstanding the falsity of its basis, however, vanity is usually a sprightly, cheerful, and often good-natured passion. Pride is always grave, sullen, and severe. Even the falsehoods of the vain man are innocent falsehoods, meant to raise himself, not to lower other people. The proud man (let's be fair) doesn't often go as low as falsehood; but when he does, his falsehoods are far from innocent. They are all trouble-making, and meant to lower other people. He is full of indignation against people who are accorded a superiority that he thinks they don't deserve; and this makes him energetic in saying what he can to undermine the supposed basis for their superiority, and to pass on, uncritically, stories that discredit them. The worst falsehoods of vanity are all so-called 'white lies'; when pride sinks to the level of falsehoods, they are falsehoods of the opposite colour!

Our dislike of pride and vanity generally inclines us to rank •below rather than above the common level the people we think of as proud or vain. I think we are usually wrong about this, and that the proud man and the vain one are often and perhaps usually a good deal •above the common level, though nowhere near *as much* above it as the proud man thinks he is or as the vain man wants *you* to think he is. . . . Pride is often accompanied by many •respectworthy virtues—truthfulness, integrity, a high sense of honour, cordial and steady friendship, unshakable firmness and resolution. Vanity is often accompanied by many •likeable virtues—humaneness, politeness, a desire to be helpful in all little matters, and sometimes real generosity in great matters. . . . In the last century, the French were accused of vanity by their rivals and enemies, while the Spanish were accused of pride; and foreign nations were inclined to regard the French as more likeable and the Spanish as more respectworthy.

[Smith's next three points can be reported briefly. **(i)** The word 'vain' is never used approvingly; 'proud' is sometimes used as a term of praise, though when that happens 'pride is being confused with magnanimity'. **(ii)** A proud man is likely to be too contented with himself to try for self-improvement, unlike the vain man, who would like to have the qualities and talents that people admire. A vain young man shouldn't be discouraged from trying to become something worthy of admiration; and his vanity—which is really just his trying to get admiration too soon—should be treated

with forbearance. **(iii)** Pride and vanity often go together in one man, and Smith explains why this is natural:] It is natural that a man who thinks more highly of himself than he deserves should want other people to think still more highly of him; and that a man who wants other people to think more highly of him than he thinks of himself should also think more highly of himself than he deserves.

[Here Smith introduced the 'point of propriety' for this or that passion, and discussed 'too much' and 'too little' for various passions. When here he turned to self-estimation, this led him into two topics—•different standards for self-estimation, and •pride and vanity— that mostly breathed the air of 'too high'. Now at last he is going to discuss the 'too low' side of self-estimation.]

Men whose merit is considerably above the common level sometimes *under*-rate themselves. Such a person is often pleasant to be with, in private: his companions are at ease in the society of such a perfectly modest and unassuming man. But those companions, though they are fond of him, are likely not to have much respect; and the warmth of their fondness usually won't be enough to make up for the coolness of their respect. That won't apply if the companions have more discernment *and* more generosity than people usually have. Men of ordinary discernment never rate a person higher than he appears to rate himself. 'Even *he* seems unsure whether he is perfectly fit for the post we are considering him for', they say, and they immediately appoint some impudent blockhead who has no doubt about *his* qualifications. And even discerning people, if they are mean-minded, will take advantage of his simplicity and impertinently set themselves up as superior to him although they are nothing of the sort. His good nature may enable him to put up with this for some time, but he'll grow tired of it eventually. That is apt to happen when it is too late, i.e. when the rank that he ought to have had is lost irrecoverably, having been stolen—through his failure to push his own merits—by some more pushy but less meritorious companion. . . . Such a man, too unassuming and unambitious in his younger years, is often insignificant, complaining, and discontented in his old age.

The unfortunate folk whom nature has formed a good deal *below* the common level seem sometimes to rate themselves as even *further* below it than they really are. This humility appears sometimes to sink them into idiotism. [Smith could mean 'sink them into *behaving like* idiots' or 'sink them into *being* idiots'. The ensuing discussion implies a challenge to the very distinction between those two.] Examine idiots carefully and you'll find that many of them have faculties of understanding that are quite as strong as those of many people who, though

acknowledged to be dull and stupid, are not classified as ‘idiots’ by anyone. Many idiots who have had no more than ordinary education have learned to •read, •write, and •do sums tolerably well. And many persons who were never classified as ‘idiots’ and who received careful education have never been able to acquire a reasonable level in any one of •those three accomplishments—not even when, later on in life, they have had spirit enough to try to learn what their early education hadn’t taught them. ·They have escaped being classed as ‘idiots’ because· an instinct of pride has led them •to set themselves on a level with their equals in age and situation, and —with courage and firmness—•to maintain their proper station among their companions. By an opposite instinct, the idiot feels himself to be below every company into which you can introduce him. Ill-treatment (which is extremely likely to come his way) can throw him into violent fits of rage and fury. But no good usage, no kindness or patience, can ever raise him to converse with you as your equal. If you can bring him into conversation with you at all, you’ll often find his answers •relevant enough and even •sensible; but they will always be marked by his strong sense of his own great inferiority. He seems to shrink back from your look and conversation, and to feel—seeing himself from your viewpoint—that despite your apparent kindness to him you can’t help considering him as immensely below you. **(a)** Some idiots—perhaps most idiots—seem really to be immensely below the rest of us, mainly or entirely because of a certain numbness or sluggishness in their faculties of the understanding. But there are **(b)** other idiots whose faculties of understanding don’t appear to be more sluggish or numb than in **(c)** many people who are not regarded as idiots. ·Then what is the difference between the **(b)** group and the **(c)** group? It’s that· the instinct of pride that is needed if they are to maintain themselves on a level with their brethren seems to be totally lacking in the **(b)** group and not in the **(c)** group.

So it seems that the degree of self-estimation that contributes most to the happiness and contentment of the person himself seems also to be the degree that is most agreeable to the impartial spectator. The man who values himself as he ought and no more than he ought is nearly always valued by other people at the level that he thinks is right. He wants no more than is due to him, and he settles for that with complete satisfaction.

The proud man and the vain man, on the other hand, are constantly dissatisfied. One is tormented with indignation at the high ranking that other

people get (wrongly, he thinks). The other is in continual fear of the shame that he predicts he would suffer if his deceit were discovered. Take the special case of a vain man who makes extravagant claims about himself although he really *does* have a fine mind and splendid abilities and virtues and is also favoured by good luck. His claims will be accepted by the multitude, whose applause he doesn't care about much; but they won't be accepted by the wise people whose approval is just what he is most anxious to get. He feels that they see through his deceptions and suspects that they despise him for them; and he may well suffer the cruel misfortune of becoming. . . .a furious and vindictive enemy of the very people whose friendship he would have most enjoyed.

Though our dislike for the proud and the vain often inclines us to rank them rather below than above their real level, we seldom venture to treat them badly unless we are provoked by some particular and personal impertinence. In common cases we find it more comfortable to accept their folly and adjust ourselves to it as best we can. But with the man who *under*-rates himself the situation is different: we usually do to *him* all the injustice that he does to himself, and often much more (unless we are more discerning and more generous than most people are). As well as being more unhappy in his own feelings than either the proud or the vain man is, he is much more open ·than they are· to every sort of ill-treatment by other people. It is almost always better to be •a little too proud than to be •in any respect too humble. In the sentiment of self-estimation, some degree of excess seems—to the person himself *and* to the impartial spectator—to be less disagreeable than any degree of defect.

In this respect, therefore, self-estimation is like every other emotion, passion, and habit: the degree that is most agreeable to the impartial spectator is likewise most agreeable to the person himself. . . .

Conclusion of Part VI

Concern for our own happiness recommends to us the virtue of **(1)** prudence; concern for the happiness of other people recommends to us the virtues of **(2)** justice, which restrains us from harming their happiness, and **(3)** beneficence, which prompts us to promote it. Quite apart from any considerations about the sentiments of other people—facts about what those sentiments

are, or

ought to be, or

would be if such-and-such were the case

—**(1)** prudence is **basically** recommended to us by our selfish affections, and **(2)** justice and **(3)** benevolence by our benevolent ones. But a regard for the sentiments of other people enters the picture after the **basis** is laid, serving to enforce and to direct the practice of all those virtues. Anyone who has for many years walked steadily and uniformly in the paths of prudence, justice, and proper beneficence has been primarily guided in his conduct by a concern for the sentiments of •the imagined impartial spectator, •the great inmate of the breast, •the great judge and arbiter of conduct. If in the course of the day we have in any way swerved from the rules that •he prescribes to us, if we have

(1) gone too far or not far enough in our frugality,

(2) in any way harmed the interests or happiness of our neighbour (through passion or by mistake), or

(3) neglected a clear and proper opportunity to do something *for* those interests and that happiness,

it is this inmate of the breast who, in the evening, challenges us concerning those omissions and violations, and his reproaches often make us blush inwardly for our folly and inattention to our own happiness and for our still greater indifference and inattention to the happiness of other people.

But though the virtues of **(1)** prudence, **(2)** justice, and **(3)** beneficence can at different times be recommended to us almost equally by two different sources (·our feelings and those of the impartial spectator·), the virtues of **(4)** self-control are in most cases recommended to us almost entirely by one source—our sense of propriety, our regard for the sentiments of the imagined impartial spectator. Without the restraint that *this* imposes, every passion would usually rush headlong to its own gratification. . . . No facts about time or place would restrain vanity from loud and impertinent showing off, or restrain voluptuousness from open, indecent, and scandalous indulgence. In nearly every case, the only thing that overawes all those mutinous and turbulent passions, toning them down into something that the impartial spectator can enter into and sympathize with, is a concern for what the sentiments of other people are, or ought to be, or would be if such-and-such were the case.

It’s true that sometimes those passions are restrained not so much by •a sense of their impropriety as by •a prudential consideration of the bad

consequences that might follow from letting them have their way. In these cases the passions are *restrained* but aren't always *subdued*, and they often remain lurking in the breast with all their original fury. The man whose anger is restrained by fear doesn't always get rid of his anger, but only delays acting on it until it is safer for him to do so. Contrast that with the following case:

> A man tells someone else about the harm that has been done to him, and immediately feels the fury of his passion being cooled and calmed down through sympathy with the more moderate sentiments of his companion. He adopts those more moderate sentiments for himself, coming to view the harm not in the black and atrocious colours in which he had originally saw it but in the much milder and fairer light in which his companion naturally views it.

This man doesn't just restrain his anger; he to some extent subdues it. The passion becomes really less than it was before, and less capable of arousing him to the violent and bloody revenge that he may at first have thought of inflicting.

When any passion is restrained by the sense of propriety it will be somewhat moderated and subdued. But when a passion is restrained only by prudential considerations of some sort, it is often inflamed by the restraint, and sometimes. . . .it bursts out with tenfold fury and violence in some context where nobody is thinking about the matter and the outburst is merely absurd.

[The remaining three paragraphs of the section are mainly repetitions of things said earlier.]

Part VII: Systems of moral philosophy

Section 1: The questions that ought to be examined in a theory of moral sentiments
Section 2: The different accounts that have been given of the nature of virtue
- Chapter 1: Systems that make virtue consist in propriety
- Chapter 2: A system that makes virtue consist in prudence
- Chapter 3: Systems that make virtue consist in benevolence
- Chapter 4: Licentious systems

Section 3: The different systems that have been formed concerning the source of approval
- Chapter 1: Systems that trace the source of approval back to self-love
- Chapter 2: Systems that make reason the source of approval
- Chapter 3: Systems that make sentiment the source of approval

Section 4: What different authors have said about the practical rules of morality

Section 1: The questions that ought to be examined in a theory of moral sentiments

If we examine the most famous and remarkable of the various theories that have been given regarding the nature and origin of our moral sentiments, we'll find that almost all of them coincide with *some part* of the account I have been giving; and that if everything that I have said is fully taken into account, we'll be able to explain what the view or aspect of nature was that led each particular author to form his particular system. It may be that *every* system of morality that ever had any reputation in the world has ultimately come from one or other of the sources that I have been trying to unfold. Because all those systems are in this way based on natural principles, they are all to some extent right. But because many of them are based on a partial and imperfect view of nature, many of them are in some respects wrong.

In discussing the sources of morals we have to consider two questions:

> **(1)** What does virtue consist in? That is, what kind of temperament and tenor of conduct is it that constitutes the excellent and praiseworthy character, the character that is the natural object of esteem, honour, and approval?
>
> **(2)** By what power or faculty in the mind is this character—whatever it may be—recommended. to us? That is, how does it come about that the mind prefers one tenor of conduct to another, calling one 'right' and the other 'wrong', regarding one as an object of approval, honour and reward, and the other as an object of blame, censure and punishment?

We are addressing **(1)** when we consider whether virtue consists in •benevolence, as Hutcheson imagines; or in •acting in a way that is suitable to the different relations we stand in, as Clarke supposes; or in •the wise and prudent pursuit of our own real and solid happiness, as others have thought.

We are addressing **(2)** when we consider whether the virtuous character —whatever it consists in—is recommended to us •by self-love, which makes us perceive that this character in ourselves and in others tends most to promote our own private interests; or •by reason, which points out to us the difference right and wrong behaviour in the same way that it points out the difference between truth and falsehood; or •by a special power of

perception called a ‘moral sense’, which this virtuous character gratifies and pleases while the contrary character disgusts and displeases it; or •by some other drive in human nature, for example some form of sympathy or the like.

I’ll address **(1)** in the next section, and **(2)** in section 3.

Section 2: The different accounts that have been given of the nature of virtue

The different accounts that have been given of the nature of virtue, i.e. of what temper of mind makes a character excellent and praiseworthy, can be put into three classes. **(1)** According to some accounts, the virtuous temper of mind doesn't consist in any one kind of affection but in the **proper** controlling and directing of all our affections, which may be either virtuous or vicious according to the objects they pursue and the level of intensity with which they pursue them. According to these authors, virtue consists in **propriety**.

(2) According to others, virtue consists in the judicious pursuit of our own private interest and happiness, or in the proper controlling and directing of the selfish affections that aim solely at this end. In the opinion of these authors, virtue consists in **prudence**.

(3) Yet another set of authors make virtue consist only in the affections that aim at the happiness of others, not in the ones that aim at our own happiness. According to them, the only motive that can stamp the character of virtue on any action is **disinterested benevolence**.

It's clear that the character of virtue must either •be ascribed to all and any our affections when properly controlled and directed, or •be confined to some one class of them. The big classification of our affections is into *selfish* and *benevolent*. It follows, then, that if the character of virtue can't be ascribed to all and any affections when properly controlled and directed, it must be confined either to •affections that aim directly at our own private happiness or •affections that aim directly at the happiness of others. Thus, if virtue doesn't consist in **(1)** propriety, it must consist either in **(2)** prudence or in **(3)** benevolence. It is hardly possible to imagine any account of the nature of virtue other than these three. I shall try to show later on how all the other accounts that seem different from any of these are basically equivalent to some one or other of them.

Chapter 1: Systems that make virtue consist in propriety

According to Plato, Aristotle, and Zeno, virtue consists in the propriety of conduct, or in the suitableness of the affection from which we act to the object that arouses it.

(1) In Plato's system (see *Republic* Book 4) the soul is treated as something like a little state or republic, composed of three different faculties or orders.

(i) The first is the judging faculty, which settles not only what are the proper means for achieving any end but also what ends are fit to be pursued and how they should be ordered on the scale of value. Plato rightly called this faculty 'reason', and thought it should be the governing mechanism of the whole. He was clearly taking 'reason' to cover not only the faculty for judging regarding truth and falsehood, but also the faculty by which we judge whether our desires and affections are proper or improper.

Plato put the different passions and appetites that are the natural though sometimes rebellious subjects of this ruling force into two classes or orders. **(ii)** Passions based on pride and resentment, i.e. on what the scholastics call 'the irascible part' of the soul: ambition, animosity, love of honour and fear of shame, desire for victory, superiority, and revenge. In short, all the passions that lead us to speak metaphorically of people as having 'spirit' or 'natural fire'. [Let 'irascible' be defined here by how it is used here. Outside the Platonic context it means 'angry' or 'irritable'.] **(iii)** Passions based on the love of pleasure, i.e. on what the scholastics call 'the concupiscible part' of the soul: all the appetites of the body, the love of ease and security, and of all sensual gratifications. [The only use for 'concupiscible' is this Platonic one. It is pronounced con-*kew*-pissible.]

When we interrupt a plan of conduct that **(i)** reason prescribes—a plan that we had in our cool hours selected as the most proper one for us to follow—it is nearly always because we are being prompted by one or other of those two different sets of passions, either **(ii)** by ungovernable ambition and resentment, or **(iii)** by the nagging demands of present ease and pleasure. But though these two classes of passions are so apt to mislead us, they are still regarded as necessary parts of human nature—**(ii)** to defend us against injuries, to assert our rank and dignity in the world, to make us aim at what is noble and honourable, and to make us notice others who act in the same manner; **(iii)** to provide for the support and necessities of the body.

According to Plato the essential virtue of **prudence** involves the strength, acuteness, and perfection of **(i)** the governing force, ·reason·. Prudence, he said, consists in a correct and clear discernment, with the help of general and scientific ideas, of the ends that are proper to pursue and of the means that are proper for achieving them.

When **(ii)** the first set of passions—those of the irascible part of the soul—are strong and firm enough to be able, under the direction of reason, to despise all dangers in the pursuit of what is honourable and noble, that (·said Plato·) constitutes the virtue of **fortitude and magnanimity**. These passions, according to this system, are more generous and noble than **(iii)** the others. It was thought that they are often reason's helpers, checking and restraining the inferior animal appetites. We're often angry at ourselves, objects of our own resentment and indignation, when the love of pleasure prompts to do something that we disapprove of; and when this happens (·Plato held·) **(ii)** the irascible part of our nature is being called in to assist **(i)** the rational part against **(iii)** the concupiscible part.

When those three parts of our nature are in perfect harmony with one another, when neither the **(ii)** irascible nor the **(iii)** concupiscible passions ever aim at any gratification that **(i)** reason doesn't approve of, and when reason never commands anything that these two wouldn't be willing to perform anyway, this. . . .perfect and complete harmony of soul constitute the virtue whose Greek name is usually translated by 'temperance', though a better name for it might be '*good temperament*', or '*sobriety and moderation of mind*'.

Justice, the last and greatest of the four cardinal virtues is what you have (according to Plato) when each of those three faculties of the mind confines itself to its proper work without trying to encroach on that of any other, when reason directs and passion obeys, and when each passion performs its proper duty and exerts itself towards its proper end easily and without reluctance, and with the degree of force and energy that is appropriate for the value of what is being pursued. . . .

The Greek word that expresses 'justice' has several meanings; and I believe that the same is true for the corresponding word in every other language; so those various meanings must be naturally linked in some way. •In one sense we are said to do justice to our neighbour when we don't directly harm him or his estate or his reputation. This is the justice that I discussed earlier, the observance of which can be extorted by force, and the violation of which exposes one to punishment. •In another sense we are said to do justice to our neighbour only if we have for him all the love, respect, and esteem that his character, his situation, and his connection with ourselves make it proper for us to feel, and only if we act accordingly. It's in this sense that we are said to do injustice to a man of merit who is

connected with us if, though we do him no harm, we don't exert ourselves to serve him and to place him in the situation in which the impartial spectator would be pleased to see him. [Smith reports on names that have been given to the kinds of justice corresponding to the two senses by Aristotle and the Scholastics and by Hugo Grotius, the pioneering theorist of international law. Then he introduces a third sense of 'justice' which he thinks exists in all languages. It is a sense in which *any* mistake in morals or valuation can be described as not doing justice to something-or-other. He concludes:] This third sense is evidently what Plato took justice to be, which is why he holds that justice includes within itself the perfection of every sort of virtue.

That, then, is Plato's account of the nature of virtue, or of the mental temperament that is the proper object of praise and approval. He says that virtue is the state of mind in which every faculty stays within its proper sphere without encroaching on the territory of any other, and does its proper work with exactly the degree of strength and vigour that belongs to it. This is obviously just what I have been saying about the propriety of conduct.

(2) According to Aristotle (*Nichomachean Ethics* II.5 and III.6) virtue consists in being habitually central, evenly balanced, non-extreme, according to right reason. [Smith: 'consists in the habit of mediocrity according' etc.] In his view every particular virtue lies in a kind of middle between two opposite vices—one offending by being too much affected by something and the other offending by being too little affected by it. Thus the virtue of **fortitude** or **courage** lies in the middle between the opposite vices of •cowardice and of •wild rashness, each of which offends through being •too much or •too little affected by fearful things. The virtue of **frugality** lies in a middle between avarice and profusion, each of which involves •too little or •too much attention to the objects of self-interest. Similarly, **magnanimity** lies in the middle between arrogance and pusillanimity [see note here], each of which involves a •too extravagant or •too weak sentiment of one's own worth and dignity. I need hardly point out that this account of virtue also corresponds pretty exactly with what I have already said about the propriety and impropriety of conduct.

Actually, according to Aristotle (*Nichomachean Ethics* II.14), virtue consists not so much in those moderate and right affections as in the *habit* of this moderation. To understand this you have to know that •virtue can be considered as a quality of an •action or of a •person. Considered as the

quality of an •action, it consists in the reasonable moderateness of the affection from which the action comes, whether or not this disposition is habitual to the person (Aristotle agreed with this). Considered as the quality of a •person, it consists in the habit of this reasonable moderateness, i.e. in its having become the customary and usual disposition of that person's mind. Thus, an action that comes from a passing fit of generosity is undoubtedly a generous action, but the man who performs it may not be a generous person because this may be the only generous thing he ever did. The motive and disposition of heart from which this action came may have been right and proper; but this satisfactory frame of mind seems to have come from a passing whim rather than from anything steady or permanent in the man's character, so it can't reflect any great honour on him. . . . If a single action was sufficient to qualify the person who performed it as virtuous, the most worthless of mankind could claim to have all the virtues, because there is no man who hasn't occasionally acted with prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude! But though single good actions don't reflect much praise on the person who performs them, a single vicious action performed by someone whose conduct is usually proper greatly diminishes and sometimes destroys altogether our opinion of his virtue. A single action of this kind shows well enough that his habits are not perfect, and that he can't be depended on as we might have thought he could, judging by his usual behaviour.

When Aristotle made virtue consist in practical habits (*Magna Moralia* I.1), he was probably saying this against Plato's thesis that just sentiments and reasonable judgments concerning what is fit to be done or to be avoided are all that is needed for the most perfect virtue. [In the next sentence, 'science' is used in its early modern sense of 'rigorously disciplined, deductively = "demonstratively" established and organized body of knowledge'.] Virtue, according to Plato, might be considered as a kind of science; and he thought that anyone will act rightly if he can see clearly and demonstratively what is right and what is wrong. Passion might make us act contrary to doubtful and uncertain opinions but not contrary to plain and evident judgments. Aristotle disagreed; he held that no conviction of the understanding can get the better of ingrained habits, and that good morals arise not from knowledge but from action.

(3) According to Zeno, the founder of the Stoic doctrine, every animal is recommended by nature to its own care and is endowed with a drive of self-love so that it can try to survive and to keep itself as healthy as it possibly

can. (See Cicero, *De Finibus* III; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*.) The self-love of man takes in •his body and all its organs and •his mind and all its faculties and powers; it wants the preservation and maintenance of *all* of these in their best and most perfect condition. Whatever tends to support •this state of affairs is pointed out to him by nature as fit to be chosen; and whatever tends to destroy •it is pointed out as fit to be rejected. Thus

health, strength, agility and ease of body,

as well as physical conveniences that could promote these—

wealth, power, honours, the respect and esteem of those we live with

—are naturally pointed out to us as *eligible*, i.e. as things that it is better to have than to lack. And on the other side,

sickness, infirmity, awkwardness of movement, bodily pain

as well as all the physical inconveniences that tend to bring these on—

poverty, lack of authority, the contempt or hatred of those we live with

—are similarly pointed out to us as things to be shunned and avoided. Within each of these two contrasting classes of states there are value orderings. Thus, health seems clearly preferable to strength, and strength to agility; reputation to power, and power to riches. And in the second class of states, sickness is worse than awkwardness of movement, disgrace is worse than poverty, and poverty is worse than lack of power. Virtue and the propriety of conduct consist making our choices in ways that conform to these natural value-orderings. . . .

Up to here, the Stoic idea of propriety and virtue is not different from that of Aristotle and the ancient Aristotelians. ·The next paragraph is a statement of the Stoics' views, not of mine·.

Among the basic items that nature has recommended to us as eligible is the prosperity of our family, of our relatives, of our friends, of our country, of mankind, and of the universe in general. Nature has also taught us that because the prosperity of •two is preferable to the prosperity of •one, the prosperity of •many or of •all must be infinitely more preferable still. Each of us is only *one*; so when our prosperity was inconsistent with that of the whole or of any considerable part of the whole, we ought to choose to give way to what is so vastly preferable. All the events in this world are directed by the providence of a wise, powerful, and good God; so we can be sure that whatever happens tends to the prosperity and perfection of the whole. So if we are ever poor, sick, or in any other distress, we should first of all

do our best—as far as justice and our duty to others will allow—to rescue ourselves from this disagreeable state of affairs. But if that turns out to be impossible, we ought to rest satisfied that the order and perfection of the universe requires that we should in the meantime continue in this situation. And because the prosperity of the whole should appear even to us as preferable to such an insignificant a part as ourselves, we should at each moment *like* the state we are in, whatever it is—that's what is needed if we are to maintain the complete propriety of sentiment and conduct that constitutes the perfection of our nature. Of course if an opportunity to escape ·from our poverty, sickness, or whatever· presents itself, it's our duty to take it. In that case, it will be evident that the order of the universe no longer requires us to continue in that state, and the great Director of the world has plainly called on us to leave it, by clearly pointing out how to do it. Similarly with the adversity of our relatives, our friends, our country. If we can, without violating any more sacred obligation, •prevent or •put an end to their calamity, it is undoubtedly our duty to do so. The propriety of action, i.e. the rule that Jupiter has given us for the direction of our conduct, evidently requires this of us. But if it's entirely out of our power to do •either, we ought to regard this outcome as the most fortunate that could possibly have happened; because we can be sure that it tends most to the prosperity and order of the whole, which was what we ourselves will most desire if we are wise and equitable. . . .

Epictetus wrote this:

> 'In what sense are some things said to be •according to **our** nature, and others to be •contrary to it? It is in the sense in which we consider **our**selves as separated and detached from everything else. ·Here is an analogue of the point I am making·: When you consider your right foot as separated and detached, you can say that it's according to the nature of the foot to be always clean. But if you consider it as a ·functioning· foot and not as detached from the rest of the body, it's fitting for it sometimes to trample in the dirt, sometimes to tread on thorns, perhaps even to be amputated for the sake of the whole body; and if those things can't happen to it, it is no longer a *foot*. Now, apply that to how we think about ourselves. What are you? A man. If you consider yourself as separated and detached ·from the rest of the universe·, it is according to your nature to live to old age, and to be rich and healthy. But if you consider yourself as a *man* and as a part of a whole

·universe·, the needs of that universe may make it fitting for you sometimes to be sick, sometimes to suffer the inconvenience of a sea voyage, sometimes to be in want—and perhaps eventually to die before your time. Why, then, do you complain? Don't you know that by this kind of complaint you stop being a man?, just as the insistence on the foot's cleanliness stops it from being a foot?'

[Smith devotes a long further paragraph to a more detailed statement of the Stoic's view that whatever happens to him is a matter for rejoicing because it must be what God wanted to happen. In a paragraph after that, he makes the point that on this Stoic view there is almost no basis for a good man to prefer any course of events to any other. Continuing:] The propriety or impropriety of his projects might be of great consequence to him, but their success or failure couldn't matter to him at all. If he preferred some outcomes to others, if he chose some states of affairs x and rejected others y, it was not because he regarded x as in any way intrinsically better than y, or thought that x would make him happier than y would; it would be simply because the propriety of action, the rule that the Gods had given him for the direction of his conduct, required him to choose x and reject y. All his affections were absorbed and swallowed up in two great affections; **(a)** for the discharge of his own duty, and **(b)** for the greatest possible happiness of all rational and sentient beings. For **(b)** he relied with perfect confidence on the wisdom and power of the great Superintendent of the universe. His only anxiety was about satisfying affection **(a)**—not about the outcome but about the propriety of his own endeavours. . . .

[Now Smith offers three book-pages of development of the idea that for a good Stoic—one whose passions are under control and whose only concern is to act rightly—it will be 'easy' to do the right thing in all situations: whether in prosperity or in adversity, all he has to do is to thank Jupiter for having treated him in the way He did. Smith speaks (on the Stoic's behalf) of the 'exalted delight' a good man has in facing hard times and never acting wrongly. He moves smoothly on from this to a paragraph leading to a long discussion of suicide:]

The Stoics seem to have regarded human life as a game of great skill in which there was also an element of chance (or what the man in the street takes to be chance). In such games the stake is commonly a trifle, and the whole pleasure of the game arises from playing well, fairly, and skillfully. If in such a game a good player has bad luck and happens to lose, he should

be cheerful about this, not seriously sad. He has made no mistakes, has done nothing that he ought to be ashamed of; and he has enjoyed the whole pleasure of the game. And on the other hand if by chance a bad player happens to win, that success can't give him much satisfaction. He is humiliated by the memory of all the mistakes he has made. Even during the play he is cut off from much of the pleasure that the game can give by his constant doubts—unpleasant *frightened* doubts—about whether his plays are going to succeed, and his repeated embarrassment at seeing that he has played badly. The Stoic view is that human life, with all the advantages that can possibly accompany it, should be seen as a mere two-penny stake—something too insignificant to warrant any anxious concern. . . .

The Stoics said that human life itself, as well as every good or bad thing that can accompany it, can properly be chosen and can properly be rejected, depending on the circumstances. If your actual situation involves more circumstances that are agreeable to nature [Smith's phrase] than ones that are contrary to it—more circumstances that are objects of choice than of rejection—then •*life* is the proper object of your choice; if you are to behave rightly, you should remain in •it. But if your actual situation involves, with no likelihood of improvement, more circumstances that are contrary to nature than ones agreeable to it—more circumstances that are objects of rejection than of choice—then if you are wise you'll see •*life* itself as an object of rejection. You won't merely be free to move out of •it; the propriety of conduct, the rule the Gods have given you for the direction of your conduct, *require* you to do so. . . . If your situation is on the whole disagreeable,. . . .said the Stoics, by all means get out of it. But do this without repining, murmuring or complaining. Stay calm, contented, rejoicing, thanking the gods •who have generously opened the safe and quiet harbour of death, always ready to let us in out of the stormy ocean of human life; •who have prepared this. . . .great asylum. . . .that is beyond the reach of human rage and injustice, and is large enough to contain all those who want to retire to it and all those who don't—an asylum that deprives everyone of every pretence of complaining, or even of imagining that there can be evils in human life apart from ones that a man may suffer through his own folly and weakness.

The Stoics, in the few fragments of their philosophy that have come down to us, sometimes seem to imply that it would be all right for someone to end his life just because it had displeased him in some minor way. . . .

But that is misleading: they really held that the question ‘Shall I leave my life, or remain in it?’ is important, and has to be seriously deliberated. We ought never to leave our life (they held) until we are clearly called on to do so by the superintending Power that gave us our life in the first place. But they thought one might be *called on to do so* before one had reached old age and the end of the normal span of human life. Whenever the superintending Power has managed things in such a way that our condition in life is, on the whole, something it is right to reject rather than to choose, *then* the great rule of conduct that he has given us requires us to leave our life. That is when we might be said to hear the awful and benevolent voice of that divine Being calling on us to do so.

That’s why the Stoics thought that it might be the duty of a wise man to move out of life though he was perfectly happy, and the duty of a weak man to remain in it though he was inevitably miserable. [Smith’s explanation of this can be put more briefly than he does. The wise man’s life might be going badly enough to be ‘a proper object of rejection’ although he was wise enough to be perfectly happy because the universe was unrolling as it should; the weak man’s life might be going well enough to make it wrong for him to reject it, although he wasn’t smart enough to avail himself of his opportunities and was therefore unhappy with a life that was mainly going well for him. Smith supports this with a reference to Cicero’s *De Finibus* III.]

[Then two book-pages on the historical background of the Stoic doctrine. Stoicism flourished, Smith says, at a time when the Greek city-states were at war with one another; the war was extraordinarily cruel and destructive, and most of the states were too small to offer their citizens much security. In this context, Stoicism provided Greek ‘patriots and heroes’ with something that could support them if they eventually had to face slavery, torture, or death. Smith compares this with the ‘death-song’ that an ‘American savage’ prepared in advance as something he could defiantly sing while being tortured to death. The philosophies of Plato and Aristotle also offered ‘a death-song that the Greek patriots and heroes might use on the proper occasions’, but Smith says that ‘the Stoics had prepared by far the most animated and spirited song’. Writing about the ancient Greek philosophers generally, and not just the Stoics, Smith says memorably:] The few fragments that have come down to us of what the ancient philosophers had written on these subjects constitute one of the most instructive remains of

antiquity, and also one of the most interesting. The spirit and manliness of their doctrines make a wonderful contrast with the desponding, plaintive, and whining tone of some modern systems. . . .

[Smith remarks at length that suicide 'seems never to have been common among the Greeks' and that it 'appears to have been much more prevalent among the proud Romans than it ever was among the lively, ingenious, and accommodating Greeks'. He discusses some individual Greek cases, and questions the reliability of the reports. In the time of the Roman emperors, he says, 'this method of dying seems to have been for a long time perfectly fashionable'—an exercise of vanity and exhibitionism!]

The push towards suicide, the impulse that offers to teach us that the violent action of taking one's own life ought sometimes to be applauded and approved, seems to be purely something that philosophy has produced. When Nature is sound and healthy she never seems to prompt us to suicide. It's true that there is a species of melancholy (a disease to which human nature. . . .is unhappily subject) that seems to be accompanied with what one might call an irresistible desire for self-destruction. This disease has often driven its wretched victims to this fatal extreme—often when their external circumstances were highly prosperous, and sometimes in defiance of serious and deeply ingrained sentiments of religion. People who perish in this miserable way are proper objects not of censure but of pity. To try to punish them, when they are beyond the reach of all human punishment, is as unjust as it is absurd. . . . Nature, when sound and healthy, prompts us to •avoid distress on all occasions, and on many occasions to •defend ourselves against it, even at the risk—or indeed the certainty—of dying in the attempt. But when we haven't been able to defend ourselves from distress but haven't died trying, no natural impulse—no regard for the approval of the imagined impartial spectator, i.e. for the judgment of the man within the breast—seems to call on us to escape from distress by destroying ourselves. When we are driven to decide on suicide, what drives us is only our awareness of our own weakness, of our own inability to bear the calamity in a properly manly and firm manner. . . .

The two doctrines on which the entire fabric of Stoical morality is based are these:

(i) disregard for ·the difference between· life and death, and

(ii) complete submission to the order of Providence, complete contentment with every outcome that the current of human affairs

could possibly cast up.

The independent and spirited (though often harsh) Epictetus can be seen as the great apostle of **(i)**, and the mild, humane, benevolent Antoninus is the great apostle of **(ii)**.

(i) After a life with many vicissitudes, Epictetus was banished from Rome and Athens, and lived in exile knowing that at any moment he could receive a death sentence from the tyrannical emperor who had banished him. His way of preserving his tranquillity was to develop in his mind a strong sense that human life is insignificant. ·In his writings· he never exults so much (and so his eloquence is never so animated) as when he is representing the futility and nothingness of all life's pleasures and all its pains.

(ii) The good-natured Emperor ·Antoninus· (known in philosophy as Marcus Aurelius) was the absolute ruler of the whole civilized world, and certainly had no special reason to complain about the share of good things the world had given him. But he delights in expressing his contentment with the ordinary course of things, pointing out beauties even in things where ordinary observers are not apt to see any. There is a propriety and even an engaging grace, he observes, in old age as well as in youth; and the weakness and decrepitude of age are as suitable to nature as is youth's bloom and vigour. And it's just as proper for old age to end in death as it is for childhood to end in youth and for youth to end in manhood. In another place he writes this:

> 'A physician may order some man to ride on horseback, or to have cold baths, or to walk barefooted; and we ought to see Nature, the great director and physician of the universe, as ordering that some man shall have a disease, or have a limb amputated, or suffer the loss of a child. From the prescriptions of ordinary physicians the patient swallows many a bitter dose of medicine, and undergoes many painful operations, gladly submitting to all this in the hope—and that's all it is: *hope*—that health may be the result. Well, the patient can in the same way hope that the harshest prescriptions of the great Physician of nature will in the same way contribute to his own health, his own final prosperity and happiness; and he can be quite sure that they don't merely •contribute but •are indispensably necessary to the health, prosperity and happiness of the universe, to the furtherance and advancement of Jupiter's great plan. If they weren't, the universe

> would never have produced them; its all-wise Architect and Director wouldn't have allowed them to happen. The parts of the universe are exactly fitted together, and all contribute to composing one immense and connected system; so every part, even the most insignificant parts, of the sequence of events is an *essential* part of that great chain of causes and effects that never began and will never end—a part that is necessary not only for the universe's prosperity but also for its very survival. Anyone who doesn't cordially embrace whatever happens to him, is sorry that it has happened to him, wishes that it hadn't happened to him, is someone who wants as far as he can to *stop the motion of the universe*, to break that great series of events through which the universal system is continued and preserved, and for some little convenience of his own to disorder and discompose the whole machine of the world. . . .'

From these high-minded doctrines the Stoics, or at least some of them, tried to deduce all the rest of their paradoxical philosophy. ·I shall call attention to just two of their paradoxical doctrines·.

A: The wise Stoic tries to enter into the views of the great Superintendent of the universe, and to see things in the light in which that divine Being sees them. But to this great Superintendent all the different events that the course of his providence may bring forth—from the smallest to the greatest, e.g. from the bursting of a bubble to the bursting of a world, are •equally parts of the great chain that he has predestined from all eternity, are •equally the effects of the same unerring wisdom, of the same universal and boundless benevolence. **So all those different events must be on a par for the Stoic wise man too**. One little department within those events has been assigned to him, and he has some little management and direction of them. In this department he tries to act as properly as he can, and to conduct himself according to the orders that (he thinks) he has been given. But he has no anxious or passionate concern over the success or failure of his own most faithful endeavours. Regarding the little system that has been to some extent committed to his care, it means *nothing* to him whether it has the highest prosperity or is totally destroyed. If that outcome—•prosperity or •destruction—had depended on him, he would have chosen •one and rejected •the other. But it doesn't depend on him; so he trusts to a wisdom greater than his, and is satisfied that the outcome, whatever it may be, is the one he would have devoutly wished for if he had known all the

facts about how things are interconnected. Whatever he does under the influence and direction of those principles is equally perfect; snapping his fingers is as meritorious, as worthy of praise and admiration, as laying down his life in the service of his country. . . .

B: Just as those who arrive at this state of perfection are equally happy, so all those who fall short of it by any amount, however small, are equally miserable. In the Stoics' view, just as

> a man who is only an inch below the surface of the water can't breathe any more than someone who is a hundred yards down,

so also

> a man who hasn't *completely* subdued all his private, partial, and selfish passions, who has an earnest desire for *anything* other than universal happiness, who hasn't *completely* emerged from that abyss of misery and disorder that he has been in because of his anxiety for the satisfaction of those private, partial, and selfish passions, can't breathe the free air of liberty and independence, can't enjoy the security and happiness of the wise man, any more than someone who is enormously far from that situation. [Here and in what follows, 'partial' means 'not impartial', or 'biased'.]

Just as all the actions of the wise man are perfect, equally perfect, so all the actions of the man who hasn't arrived at this supreme wisdom are faulty, and, according to some of the Stoics, equally faulty. One truth can't be more true than another, and one falsehood can't be more false than another; and similarly one honourable action can't be more honourable than another, nor can one shameful action be more shameful than another. . . . A man who has killed a cock improperly and without a sufficient reason is morally on a par with a man who has murdered his father.

The first of those two paradoxes seems bad enough, but the second is obviously too absurd to deserve serious consideration. It's so absurd, indeed, that one suspects that it must have been somewhat misunderstood or misrepresented. I can't believe that men such as Zeno or Cleanthes—men whose eloquence was said to be both simple and very uplifting—could be the authors of these two paradoxes of Stoicism, or of most of the others. The others are in general mere impertinent quibbles, which do so little honour to Stoicism that I shall say no more about them. I'm inclined to attribute them to Chrysippus. He was indeed a disciple and follower of Zeno and Cleanthes; but from what we know of him he seems to have been

a mere argumentative pedant, with no taste or elegance of any kind. He may have been the first who put Stoicism into the form of a scholastic or technical system of artificial definitions, divisions, and subdivisions; which may be one the most effective ways of extinguishing whatever good sense there is in a moral or metaphysical doctrine! It is easy to believe that such a man could have construed too literally some of the lively expressions that his masters used in describing the happiness of the man of perfect virtue and the unhappiness of whoever fell short of that character.

[Smith says that the Stoics in general seem to have allowed that there are different degrees of wrongness of behaviour, and he reports some technical terms that were used in this connection by Cicero and Seneca. None of this is needed for what comes next. Having said that the main lines of the moral philosophies of Plato and of Aristotle *are* in line with his own views, Smith now implies that Stoicism *is not*. But he doesn't put it like that. Rather, he says:]

The plan and system that Nature has sketched out for our conduct seems to be altogether different from that of the Stoic philosophy.

The events that immediately affect the little department in which we ourselves have some management and direction— the events that immediately affect ourselves, our friends, our country—are the ones that Nature •makes us care about most and •makes the main causes of our desires and aversions, our hopes and fears, our joys and sorrows. When those passions are too violent (as they are apt to be), Nature has provided a proper remedy and correction. The real or even the imaginary presence of the impartial spectator, the authority of the man within the breast, is always at hand to awe our passions into coming down to a properly moderate level.

If despite our best efforts all the events that can affect our little department turn out to be unfortunate and disastrous, Nature hasn't left us without consolation. We can get comfort not only from the complete approval of the man within the breast but also from a still nobler and more generous source, namely

> a firm reliance on, and a reverential submission to, the benevolent wisdom which directs all the events of human life, and which (we can be sure) would never have allowed those misfortunes to happen if they hadn't been utterly necessary for the good of the whole.

But Nature has *not* prescribed this lofty thought to us as the great business and occupation of our lives! She merely points it out to us as consolation in

our misfortunes. The Stoic philosophy prescribes this thought as though turning it over in our minds were the main thing we have to do with our lives. That philosophy teaches us that we are not to care earnestly and deeply about anything except •the good order of our own minds, the propriety of our own choosings and rejections, and •events that concern a department where we don't and shouldn't have any sort of management or direction, namely the department of the great Superintendent of the universe. By

> •the perfect passiveness that it prescribes to us, by
>
> •trying not merely to moderate but to eradicate all our private, partial, and selfish affections, by
>
> •not allowing us to have feelings for what happens to ourselves, our friends, our country—not even the sympathetic and reduced passions of the impartial spectator,

Stoicism tries to make us entirely indifferent and unconcerned about the success or failure of everything that *Nature* has prescribed to us as the proper business and occupation of our lives.

Although the reasonings of philosophy may confound and perplex the understanding, they can't break down the necessary connection Nature has established between causes and their effects. The causes that naturally arouse our desires and aversions, our hopes and fears, our joys and sorrows, produce their proper and necessary effects on each individual, according to his actual level of sensitivity, and all the reasonings of Stoicism can't stop that. However, the judgments of the man within the breast *might* be considerably affected by those reasonings, and that great inmate might be taught by them to attempt to overawe all our private, partial, and selfish affections into a more or less perfect tranquillity. Directing the judgments of this inmate is the great purpose of all systems of morality. There's no doubt that the Stoic philosophy had great influence on the character and conduct of its followers; and though it might sometimes have incited them to unnecessary violence, its general tendency was to stir them up to perform actions of heroic magnanimity and extensive benevolence.

(4) [This follows the treatment of **(3)** Stoicism which began here.] Besides these ancient systems there are some modern ones according to which virtue consists in propriety, i.e. in the suitableness of •the affection from which we act to •the cause or object that arouses it. Clark's system places virtue in

> •acting according to the relations of things, i.e. in

•regulating our conduct according to whether a proposed action would fit, or be congruous with, certain things or certain relations;

Wollaston's system places virtue in

•acting according to the truth of things, according to their proper nature and essence, i.e. •treating them as what they really are and not as what they are not;

Lord Shaftesbury's system identifies virtue with

•maintaining a proper balance of the affections, allowing no passion to go beyond its proper sphere.

These theories are all more or less inaccurate presentations of the same fundamental idea.

None of those systems gives—none of them even *claims* to give—any precise or distinct criterion that will guide us in discovering or judging this fitness or propriety of affections. The only place where that precise and distinct measure can be found is in the sympathetic feelings of the impartial and well-informed spectator.

Each of those systems gives a description of virtue that is certainly correct as far as it goes. (I should really say 'gives or intends to give'—some of the modern authors don't express themselves very well.) There's no virtue without propriety, and wherever there is propriety some degree of approval is due. But this is an incomplete account of virtue. Propriety is indeed an essential ingredient in every virtuous action, but it's not always the sole ingredient. Beneficent actions have in them another quality which seems to entitle them not only to approval but also to reward. None the systems I have mentioned accounts either easily or sufficiently for •the superior degree of esteem that seems due to such actions, or for •the variety of sentiments that they naturally arouse. And their description of vice is also incomplete in a similar way. Impropriety is a necessary ingredient in every vicious action, but it isn't always the sole ingredient. Deliberate actions that cause real harm to those we live with are not merely improper but have a special quality of their own that seems to make them deserve not only disapproval but punishment, and to be objects not only of dislike but of resentment and revenge. None of those systems easily and sufficiently accounts for the higher degree of detestation that we feel for such actions. (·Also, impropriety doesn't necessarily involve immorality·: there is often the highest degree of absurdity and impropriety in actions that are harmless and insignificant.)

Chapter 2: A system that makes virtue consist in prudence

The most ancient of the systems that make virtue consist in prudence, and of which any considerable record has come down to us, is that of Epicurus. He is said to have borrowed all the leading principles of his philosophy from some of his predecessors, especially Aristippus; but that's what his enemies said, and it's probable that at least his way of applying those principles was altogether his own.

According to Epicurus, bodily pleasure and pain are the sole ultimate objects of natural desire and aversion. (Cicero, *De Finibus* I; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, I.10.) Of course it might sometimes seem that some pleasure should be avoided; but that is only because by enjoying it we would be losing some greater pleasure or incurring some pain that wouldn't have been compensated for by the pleasure that led to it. And similarly for cases where it seems that some pain should be chosen—as a way of avoiding some other worse pain, or of getting a pleasure that would more than make up for the pain. Given those explanations, Epicurus thought it to be really obvious—and not in need of proof—that bodily pain and pleasure are *always* natural objects of desire and aversion, and that they are the *only* ultimate objects of those passions. According to him, anything else that is either desired or avoided is so because of its tendency to produce one or other of those sensations. •The tendency to procure pleasure makes power and riches desirable, as the contrary tendency to produce pain makes poverty an object of aversion. •Honour and reputation are valued because the esteem and love of those we live with are a great help in getting us pleasure and defending us from pain. •Disgrace and notoriety are to be avoided because the hatred, contempt and resentment of those we lived with destroys all security and lays us wide open to the greatest bodily evils.

[The next two pages expound the views of Epicurus, and that's all they do. Smith resumes speaking for himself in the paragraph starting 'Such is the doctrine of Epicurus. . . ' here.]

All the pleasures and pains of the •mind are ultimately derived from those of the •body. The mind is happy when it thinks of the past pleasures of the body and hopes for more to come; and it is miserable when it thinks of pains that the body has endured, and dreads the same or greater thereafter.

But the pleasures and pains of the mind, though ultimately derived from those of the body, are vastly greater than their originals. The body feels only the sensation of the •present instant, whereas the mind also feels the •past

by memory and the •future by anticipation, and consequently suffers and enjoys much more. When we are suffering the greatest bodily pain, we'll always find—if we attend to it—that what chiefly torments us is not the suffering of the present instant but either the agonizing memory of the past or the even more horrible fear of the future. The pain of each instant, considered by itself and cut off from everything that happens before or after it, is a trifle, not worth attending to. Yet that is all that the body can ever be said to suffer. Similarly, when we enjoy the greatest pleasure we'll always find that the bodily sensation—the sensation of the present instant—creates only a small part of our happiness, and that our enjoyment mainly comes from the cheerful recollection of the past or the still more joyous anticipation of the future, so that the mind always contributes by far the largest share of the entertainment.

Since our happiness and misery mainly depend on the mind, if *this* part of our nature is well disposed, and our thoughts and opinions are as they should be, it doesn't matter much how our body is affected. Though in great bodily pain, we can still enjoy a considerable share of happiness if our reason and judgment keep the upper hand. We can entertain ourselves with memories of past pleasures and hopes for future ones; and we can soften the severity of our pains by bearing in mind what it is that at this moment we *have to* suffer. Thinking about this can lessen our suffering in any of four ways by leading us to ponder four thoughts. **(1)** All I am compelled to suffer is merely the bodily sensation, the pain of the present instant, and that can't be great. **(2)** Any agony that I suffer from the fear that my pain will continue is an effect of an opinion of my mind, and I can correct that by having sentiments that are more correct. **(3)** If my pains are violent they probably won't last long; and if they go on for long they will probably be moderate, and will be interrupted from time to time. **(4)** Death is always available to me as an option; it would put an end to all sensation, whether of pain or of pleasure, and can't be regarded as an evil. When we exist, death doesn't; and when death exists, we don't; so death can't matter to us.

If the actual sensation of positive pain is, in itself, •so little to be feared, the sensation of pleasure is •still less to be desired. The sensation of pleasure is naturally much less forceful [Smith: 'pungent'] than that of pain; so if pain can take so little from the happiness of a well-disposed mind, pleasure could add hardly anything to it. When the body is free from pain and the mind from fear and anxiety, the added sensation of bodily pleasure

can’t matter much; it might diversify someone’s mental content but can’t properly be said to increase the happiness of his situation.

Thus, the most perfect state of human nature, the most complete happiness that man is capable of enjoying, is *bodily ease and security or tranquillity of mind*. To obtain this great end of natural desire is the sole object of all the virtues, which are desirable not on their own account but because of their tendency to bring about this situation ·of ease and tranquillity·.

Take the case of **prudence**. It is the source and energiser of all the virtues, but it isn’t desirable on its own account. That careful and laborious and circumspect state of mind— always on the watch for even the most distant consequences of every action—can’t be pleasant or agreeable for its own sake. What makes it valuable is its tendency to procure the greatest goods and to keep off the greatest evils.

Similarly with **temperance**—curbing and restraining our natural passions for enjoyment, which is the job of temperance, can’t ever be desirable for its own sake. The whole value of this virtue arises from its utility, from its enabling us to postpone the present enjoyment for the sake of a greater to come, or to avoid a greater pain that might ensue from it. Temperance, in short, is nothing but prudence with regard to pleasure.

The situations that **fortitude** would often lead us into— keeping hard at work, enduring pain, risking danger or death—are surely even further from being objects of natural desire. They are chosen only to avoid greater evils. We submitted to hard work in order to avoid the greater shame and pain of poverty, and we risk danger and death •in defence of our liberty and property, which are means and instruments of pleasure and happiness, or •in defence of our country, the safety of which necessarily includes our own safety. Fortitude enables us to do all this cheerfully, as the best that is possible in our present situation; it’s really just prudence—good judgment and presence of mind in properly appreciating pain, labour, and danger, always choosing the less in order to avoid the greater.

It is the same case with **justice**. Abstaining from taking something that belongs to someone else isn’t desirable on its own account: it’s not certain that it would be *better for you* if I kept this item of mine than that you should possess it. But you oughtn’t to take any of my belongings from me because if you do you’ll provoke the resentment and indignation of mankind. ·If that happens·, the security and tranquillity of your mind will

be destroyed. You'll be filled with fear and confusion by the thought of the punishment that you will imagine men are always ready to inflict on you. . . . The other sort of justice that consists in giving good help to various people according to their relations to us—as neighbours, kinsmen, friends, benefactors, superiors, or equals—is recommended by the same reasons. Acting properly in all these different relations brings us the esteem and love of those we live with, and doing otherwise arouses their contempt and hatred. By the one we naturally secure, and by the other we necessarily endanger, our own ease and tranquillity, which are the great and ultimate objects of all our desires. So the whole virtue of justice—the most important of all the virtues—is no more than discreet and prudent conduct with regard to our neighbours.

Such is the doctrine of Epicurus concerning the nature of virtue. It may seem extraordinary that this philosopher, who was said to be personally very likeable, should have overlooked the fact that

- whatever those virtues (or the contrary vices) tend to produce in the way of bodily ease and security, the sentiments they naturally arouse in others are objects of a much more passionate desire (or aversion) than all their other consequences; that
- every well-disposed mind attaches more value to being likeable, being respectworthy, being a proper object of esteem, than to all the ease and security that may *come from* such love, respect, and esteem; that
- being odious, being contemptible, being a proper object of indignation, is more dreadful than any bodily suffering that can *come from* such hatred, contempt, or indignation;

and that consequently our desire to be virtuous and our aversion to being vicious can't arise from any concern for the bodily effects that either virtue or vice is likely to produce.

There's no doubt that this system is utterly inconsistent with the one I have been trying to establish. But it is easy enough to see what way of looking at things gave Epicurus's system its plausibility. The Author of nature has wisely arranged things so that, even in this life, virtue is ordinarily. . . .the surest and readiest means of obtaining both safety and advantage. Our success or failure in our projects must depend largely on whether people commonly have a good or a bad opinion of us, and on whether those we live with are generally disposed to help us or oppose us. But the best, surest, easiest, most readily available way to get people to

think well of us is to *deserve* their good opinion, to be proper objects of their approval. . . . So the practice of virtue is in general very advantageous to our interests, and the practice of vice is contrary to our interests; and these facts undoubtedly stamp an *additional* beauty and propriety on virtue and a *new* ugliness and impropriety on vice. In this way temperance, magnanimity, justice, and beneficence come to be approved of not only for what they essentially *are* but also for their role as very real prudence. And similarly, the contrary vices of intemperance, pusillanimity, injustice, and either malevolence or sordid selfishness come to be disapproved of not only for what they essentially are but also for their role as short-sighted folly and weakness. It seems that when Epicurus considered any virtue he attended only to this kind of propriety. It's the one that is most apt to occur to those who are trying to persuade others to behave well. When someone's conduct (and also perhaps things he says) make it clear that the natural beauty of virtue isn't likely to have much effect on him, how *can* he be moved in the direction of better behaviour except by showing him the folly of his conduct, and how much he himself is likely eventually to suffer by it?

By reducing all the •different virtues to this •one species of propriety, Epicurus did something that comes naturally to all men but is especially beloved of philosophers as a way of displaying their ingenuity! I am talking about the practice of explaining all appearances in terms of as few causes or sources as possible. And it's clear that he was taking this even further when he equated all the primary objects of natural desire and aversion with bodily pleasures and pains. This great patron of atomism, who so enjoyed deducing •all the powers and qualities of bodies from •the most obvious and familiar of them—namely, the shapes, motions, and arrangements of the small parts of matter—no doubt felt a similar satisfaction when he explained •all the sentiments and passions of the mind in terms of •those that are most obvious and familiar.

The system of Epicurus agrees with those of Plato, Aristotle, and Zeno, in making virtue consist in acting in the most suitable manner to obtain the primary objects of natural desire. It differs from all of them in two other respects—its account of what the primary objects of natural desire *are*, and its account of the excellence of virtue, i.e. of why virtue ought to be esteemed.

According to Epicurus the primary objects of natural desire are bodily pleasure and pain, and that's all; whereas the other three philosophers held

that many other objects are ultimately desirable for their own sakes—e.g. knowledge, and happiness for our relatives, our friends, and our country.

Also, according to Epicurus virtue doesn't deserve to be pursued for its own sake, and isn't one of the ultimate objects of natural appetite. He held that virtue is something to be chosen only because of its tendency to prevent pain and to procure ease and pleasure. In the opinion of the other three philosophers, on the other hand, virtue is desirable not merely •as a means for procuring the other primary objects of natural desire but •as something that is in itself more valuable than all of them. Because man is born for action, they held, his happiness must consist not merely in the agreeableness of his passive sensations but also in the propriety of his active efforts.

Chapter 3: Systems that make virtue consist in benevolence

The system that makes virtue consist in benevolence is of great antiquity, though I don't think it is as old as any of the ones I have been discussing. It seems to have been the doctrine of the greater part of those philosophers who, in the time of Augustus and shortly thereafter, called themselves 'Eclectics' and claimed to be following mainly the opinions of Plato and Pythagoras—which is why they are often called 'later Platonists'.

In the divine nature, according to these authors, benevolence or love is the sole driver of action, and directs the exercise of all the other attributes. God employed his •wisdom in finding out the means for bringing about the ends that his goodness suggested, and he exercised his infinite •power in bringing them about. But •benevolence was the supreme and governing attribute, and the other attributes were subservient to it. The ultimate source of the whole excellence. . . .of God's operations is his benevolence. The whole perfection and virtue of the human mind consists in its •having some resemblance to, some share in, the perfections of God, and therefore in its •being filled with the same drive of benevolence and love that influences all the actions of the Deity. The only actions of men that were truly praiseworthy, or could claim any merit in God's sight, are ones that flowed from benevolence. It is only by actions of charity and love that we can suitably imitate the conduct of God, expressing our humble and devout admiration of his infinite perfections. Only by fostering in our own minds the divine drive towards benevolence can we make our own affections resemble more closely God's holy attributes, thereby becoming more proper

objects of his love and esteem; until at last we arrive at the state that this philosophy is trying to get us to, namely immediate converse and communication with God.

This system was greatly admired by many ancient fathers of the Christian church, and after the Reformation it was adopted by several ·protestant· divines—eminently pious and learned men, *likeable* men—especially Ralph Cudworth, Henry More, and John Smith of Cambridge. But there can be no doubt that of all this system's patrons, ancient or modern, the late Francis Hutcheson was incomparably the most acute, the clearest, the most philosophical, and—the most important point—the soberest and most judicious. [Hutcheson died, aged 52, a dozen years before Smith wrote this.]

Many aspects of human nature support the idea that virtue consists in benevolence. I have pointed out that proper benevolence

- is the most graceful and agreeable of all the affections, that
- it is recommended to us by a double sympathy, that
- because it necessarily tends to do good, it is a proper object of gratitude and reward,

and that for all these reasons

- it appears to our natural sentiments to have a higher merit than any other virtue.

I have also remarked that even the excesses [Smith writes 'weaknesses'; evidently a slip] of benevolence are not disagreeable to us, whereas those of every other passion are always extremely disgusting. Everyone loathes excessive malice, excessive selfishness, and excessive resentment; but the most excessive indulgence even of partial friendship is not so offensive. . . .

Just as benevolence gives to the actions it produces a beauty that is superior to all others, so the lack of benevolence—and even more the contrary inclination, malevolence—gives to all its manifestations in behaviour a special ugliness all of its own. Pernicious actions are often punishable simply because they show a lack of sufficient attention to the happiness of our neighbour.

Besides all this, Hutcheson observed that when an action that was supposed to have come from benevolent affections turns out to have had some other motive, our sense of the merit of this action is lessened in proportion to how much influence this motive is believed to have had over the action. (Hutcheson, *Inquiry Concerning Virtue*, sections 1 and 2 [thus

Smith's reference; actually, that's the title of a work by Shaftesbury; Smith presumably meant to refer to Hutcheson's *Inquiry into the original of our idea of Virtue*].) If an action supposed to come from •gratitude turns out to have arisen from •an expectation of some new favour, or if an action supposed to have come from •public spirit turns out to have been motivated by a •hope for reward-money, such a discovery will entirely destroy all notion of merit or praiseworthiness in either of these actions. Thus, the mixture of any selfish motive. . . .lessens or abolishes the merit that the action would otherwise have had, and Hutcheson thought that this made it obvious that virtue must consist in pure and disinterested benevolence alone.

And when an action that is commonly supposed to come from a selfish motive turns out to have arisen from a benevolent one, that greatly enhances our sense of the action's merit. . . . This fact seemed to Hutcheson to be a further confirmation of his thesis that benevolence is the only thing that can make any action virtuous.

And finally he thought that the correctness of his account of virtue is shown by the fact that in all the disputes of casuists [= 'theorists of *applied* ethics'] concerning the rectitude of conduct, the public good is the standard to which they constantly refer, thereby all accepting that whatever tends to promote the happiness of mankind is right and laudable and virtuous, and whatever tends to go against it is wrong, blameworthy, and vicious. In debates about passive obedience and the right of resistance, the sole disagreement among men of sense concerns the answer to this:

> When privileges are invaded, which response is likely to bring the greater evils—universal submission or temporary insurrection?

As for *this* question:

> Would the upshot that tended most to the happiness of mankind be the morally good one?

—nobody, Hutcheson said, even bothered to ask it!

Since benevolence is the only motive that can make an action virtuous, the greater the benevolence that an action shows the greater is the praise that it deserves.

The actions that aim at the happiness of a great community, because they show a more enlarged benevolence than do actions aiming only at the happiness of a smaller system, are correspondingly more virtuous. So the *most* virtuous of all affections is the one that embraces as its object the happiness of all thinking beings; and the *least* virtuous of the affections that

could be called ‘virtuous’ *at all* is the one that aims no further than at the happiness of some one individual—a son, a brother, a friend. [See note about ‘affection’ here.]

The perfection of virtue, ·Hutcheson held·, consists in

- •directing all our actions to promote the greatest possible good,
- •submitting all inferior affections to the desire for the general happiness of mankind,
- •regarding oneself as merely one of the many, whose prosperity is to be pursued no further than is consistent with the prosperity of the whole.

Self-love can never be virtuous in any degree or in any direction, ·Hutcheson said·. When it obstructs the general good, it is vicious. When its only effect is to make the individual take care of his own happiness, it is merely innocent—not deserving of praise or blame. A benevolent action is especially virtuous if it is performed in defiance of some strong motive from self-interest, because that demonstrate the strength and vigour of that person’s benevolent drive.

Hutcheson was so far from allowing self-love ever to be a motive of virtuous actions that, according to him, the merit of a benevolent action is lessened if the person wanted the pleasure of self-approval, the comfortable applause of his own conscience. He saw this as a selfish motive which, so far as it contributed to any action, showed the weakness ·in that person at that time· of the pure and disinterested benevolence that is the only thing that can make a human action virtuous. Yet in the common judgments of mankind, this concern for the approval of our own minds, far from being considered as reducing the virtue of any action, is looked on as the only motive that deserves the label ‘virtuous’.

Well, that is how virtue is described in this likeable system, a system that has a special tendency •to nourish and support the noblest and most agreeable of all affections—and not only •to stop self-love from acting unjustly but also to some extent •to discourage self-love altogether by implying that it can never reflect any honour on those who are influenced by it.

Some of the other systems I have described don’t sufficiently explain what gives the supreme virtue of benevolence its special excellence, whereas this system of Hutcheson’s seems to have the opposite defect, of not sufficiently explaining why we approve of the inferior virtues of

prudence, vigilance, circumspection, temperance, constancy, firmness. The only feature of an affection that this system attends to *at all* is its aim, the beneficent or harmful effects that it tends to produce. Its propriety or impropriety, its suitableness and unsuitableness to the cause that arouses it, is completely ignored.

Also, a regard for our own private happiness and interest seems often to be a praiseworthy motive for action. It is generally supposed that self-interested motives are what lead us to develop the habits of economy, industry, discretion, attention, and application of thought, and these are taken by everyone to be praiseworthy qualities that deserve everyone's esteem and approval. It's true of course that an action that ought to arise from a benevolent affection seems to have its beauty spoiled by an admixture of a selfish motive; but that isn't because self-love can never be the motive of a virtuous action, but only because in the given case the benevolent motive appears to lack its proper degree of strength and to be altogether unsuitable to its object. The person's character seems to be imperfect, and on the whole to deserve blame rather than praise. When an action for which self-love alone ought to be a sufficient motive has an admixture of benevolence in its motivation, *that* isn't so likely to diminish our sense of the action's propriety or of the virtue of the person who performs it. We're not ready to suspect anyone of being defective in selfishness!. . . . But if we really believe, of any man, that if it weren't for a concern for his family and his friends he wouldn't take proper care of his health, his life, or his fortune,. . . .that would undoubtedly be a failing, though one of those likeable failings that make a person an object of pity rather than of contempt or hatred. It would somewhat lessen the dignity and worthiness of his character, however. Carelessness and lack of economy are universally disapproved of—not as coming from a lack of benevolence but from a lack proper attention to the objects of self-interest.

Although the standard by which applied-ethics people often decide what is right or wrong in human conduct is whether a proposed action tends to the welfare or to the disorder of society, it doesn't follow that a •concern for society's welfare is the sole virtuous motive for action—merely that in any competition •it ought to outweigh all other motives.

Benevolence may perhaps be God's only action-driver; there are several not improbable arguments that tend to persuade us that it is so. It's hard to conceive what *other* motive can drive the actions of an independent and all-

perfect Being who has no need for anything external and whose happiness is complete in himself. But be that as it may, *man* is an imperfect creature whose existence needs to be supported by many things external to him, and who must often act from many other motives. Think about the affections that ought—by the nature of our being—often to influence our conduct, and ask youself 'Can such affections *never* appear virtuous or deserve anyone's commendation?' How hard our condition would be if *that* were so!

I have described three systems:

(1) the ones that place virtue in propriety,

(2) the ones that place virtue in prudence, and

(3) the ones that place virtue in benevolence.

Those are the principal accounts that have been given of the nature of virtue. All the other descriptions of virtue ·that philosophers have presented·, however different they may *look*, are easily reducible to one of those three.

The system that places virtue in •obedience to the will of the Deity can be counted among **(2)** or among **(1)**. Consider the question 'Why ought we to obey the will of the Deity?' This question would be impious and perfectly absurd if it came from doubt about *whether* we ought to obey him; ·but there is an acceptable role for the question to play, because· it can admit of two different answers. We'll have to say

> **(2)** we ought to obey the will of the Deity because he is a Being of infinite power who will reward us eternally if we do obey him and punish us eternally if we don't; or
>
> **(1)** independently of any concern for our own happiness or for rewards and punishments of any kind, it is *fitting* that a creature should obey its creator, that a limited and imperfect being should submit to one whose perfections are infinite and incomprehensible.

Those are the only two answers that we *conceive* to that question. If **(2)** is the right answer then virtue consists in prudence, or in the proper pursuit of our own final interest and happiness. . . . If **(1)** is the right answer, then virtue must consist in propriety. . . .

The system that places virtue in *utility* belongs in **(1)**. According to this system, all the qualities of the mind that are agreeable or advantageous to the person himself or to others are approved of as virtuous, and the contrary qualities disapproved of as vicious. And the agreeableness or utility of any affection depends on its degree, i.e. on how strongly or intensely the person

has it. Every affection is useful when it is confined to a certain degree of moderation, and every affection is disadvantageous when it exceeds the proper bounds. According to this system, therefore, virtue consists not in any one affection but in the proper degree of all the affections. The only difference between this and the system I have been working to establish is that it makes utility—rather than sympathy, i.e. the corresponding affection of the spectator—the natural and basic measure of this proper degree.

Chapter 4: Licentious systems

All the systems I have presented assume that there is a real and essential distinction between vice and virtue, whatever these qualities may consist in. There is a real and essential difference between **(1)** the propriety and impropriety of any affection, between **(3)** benevolence and any other motive for action, between **(2)** real prudence and shortsighted folly or precipitate rashness. And all of them contribute to encouraging praiseworthy dispositions and discouraging blameworthy ones.

[Smith now gives the three a paragraph each in which the system in question is criticised for not getting the moral balance exactly right. This repeats things he has said already, and is given here just to set the scene for what will come in the next paragraph but one.]

Despite these defects, the general tendency of each of those three systems is to encourage the best and most laudable habits of the human mind; and it would be a good thing for society if mankind in general (or even just the few who claim to live according to some philosophical rule) were to regulate their conduct by the precepts of any one of the three. We may learn from each of them something that is both valuable and peculiar. [Smith goes into details about this, in praise of each of the three, with a special emphasis on Epicurus. Then:]

There is, however, another system that seems to remove entirely the distinction between vice and virtue, so that its tendency is wholly pernicious; I mean the system of Mandeville, ·presented in his book *The Fable of the Bees; or Private Vices, Public Benefits*·. [Mandeville died 26 years before the present work was published.] Although this author's opinions are in almost every respect erroneous, some aspects of human nature, when looked at in a certain way, seem at first sight to favour them. When they are described and exaggerated by Mandeville's lively and humorous though coarse and rustic

eloquence, they give his doctrines an air of truth and probability that is apt to impose on the unskillful.

Mandeville regards anything done from a sense of propriety, from a concern for what is commendable and praiseworthy, as being done from a love of praise and commendation— or in his words 'done from vanity'. Man, he observes, is naturally much more interested in his own happiness than in anyone else's, and it is impossible for him ever to prefer—really, in his heart—someone else's prosperity to his own. Whenever he appears to do so, we can be sure that he is deceiving us, and acting from the same selfish motives as he does at all other times. One of the strongest of his selfish passions is vanity—he is always easily flattered and greatly delighted with the applause of those around him. When he *appears* to sacrifice his own interests to those of his companions, he knows that his conduct will be highly agreeable to their self-love and that they won't fail to express their satisfaction by giving him extravagant praises. He thinks that the pleasure he'll get from this outweighs the interest that he abandons in order to get it. So •his conduct on this occasion is really just as selfish, and arises from just as mean a motive, as his conduct at any other time. He is flattered with the belief that •it is entirely disinterested, and he *flatters himself* with it too; because if this were not supposed, his behaviour wouldn't seem to him or to anyone else to merit any commendation. So all public spirit, all preference of public to private interest, is according to Mandeville a mere cheat and imposition on mankind; and the human virtue that is so much boasted of, and that is the occasion of so much emulation among men, is the mere offspring of pride impregnated by flattery!

Can the most generous and public-spirited actions be regarded as in some sense coming from self-love? I shan't try to answer that now. The answer to it is no help in establishing the reality—·or the *non*-reality·—of virtue, because self-love can often be a virtuous motive for action. I'll only try to show that **(1)** the desire to do what is honourable and noble, to make ourselves proper objects of esteem and approval, cannot with any propriety be called 'vanity'. Even **(2)** the love of well-grounded fame and reputation, the desire to acquire esteem by what is really estimable, does not deserve that name. **(1)** is the love of virtue, the noblest and best passion in human nature. **(2)** is the love of true glory, a passion that in dignity appears to come just below the love of virtue. [Smith describes the sort of person who *is* guilty of vanity: someone who

•wants praise for qualities that don't deserve as much praise as he wants, or
•cares about fancy clothing and trivial bits of 'elegant' behaviour, or
•wants to be praised for something that *he* didn't do, or
•comes across as 'important' although he isn't, or
•gets himself congratulated on adventures that in fact he didn't have, or
•claims to be the author of something he didn't write;

that person really is vain in the proper sense of the word. Also:] **(3)** Someone is rightly said to be guilty of vanity if he •isn't contented with the silent sentiments of esteem and approval, •is fonder of noisy acclamations than of the sentiments themselves, •is never satisfied except when his own praises are ringing in his ears, •tries really hard to get external marks of respect, •is fond of titles, of compliments, of being visited, of being attended, of being taken notice of in public places with the appearance of deference and attention. *This* trivial passion is entirely different from either of the other two; it's a passion of the lowest and least of mankind, just as **(1)** and **(2)** are passions of the noblest and greatest.

But though these three passions—**(1)** the desire to make ourselves proper objects of honour and esteem, i.e. to become honourable and estimable, **(2)** the desire to acquire honour and esteem by really deserving those sentiments, and **(3)** the trivial desire for praise no matter how or why it comes—are widely different; though two are always approved of while the third never fails to be despised; there is a certain remote affinity among them; and that is what the humorous and entertaining eloquence of this lively author has exaggerated and used to deceive his readers. There is an affinity between **(3)** vanity and **(2)** the love of true glory, in that both these passions aim at getting esteem and approval. But they are different in this—**(2)** is a just, reasonable, and equitable passion, while **(3)** is unjust, absurd, and ridiculous. The man who wants to be esteemed for something that really is estimable wants only what he is justly entitled to—you would be *wronging* him by refusing it. Whereas a man who wants esteem on any other terms is asking for something that he has no just claim to. [Smith adds details about ways in which the **(3)** person is sure to behave badly. Then:]

There is also an affinity between **(1)** the desire to become honourable and estimable and **(2)** the desire for honour and esteem, between the love of virtue and the love of true glory. They are alike in both aiming at being

honourable and noble, and also in a respect in which **(2)** the love of true glory resembles **(3)** what is properly called vanity—namely having some reference to the sentiments of others. The man of the greatest magnanimity who **(1)** desires virtue for its own sake and cares least about what mankind actually think of him is still delighted with thoughts of what they should think, with an awareness that though he may be neither honoured nor applauded he is still a proper object of honour and applause. . . . But there is still a great difference between **(1)** and **(2)**. . . . The man **(1)** who acts solely from a concern for what is right and fit to be done, a concern for what is a proper object of esteem and approval even if these sentiments are never bestowed on him, acts from the most sublime and godlike motive that human nature is even capable of conceiving. In contrast with that, the man **(2)** who doesn't just want to •deserve approval but is also anxious to •get it, though he too is praiseworthy in the main, has motives with a greater mixture of human infirmity in them. He risks being humiliated by the ignorance and injustice of mankind, and his happiness is vulnerable to the envy of his rivals and the folly of the public. The happiness of **(1)** the other is altogether secure and independent of fortune, and of the whims of those he lives with. If contempt and hatred are thrown on him by the ignorance of mankind, he isn't humiliated because he regards this as not really aimed at *him*. Mankind despise and hate him because they have a false notion of his character and conduct. If they knew him better, they *would* esteem and love him. . . . It seldom happens, however, that human nature arrives at *this* degree of firmness. Only weak and worthless people are much delighted with •false glory, and yet by a strange inconsistency •false disgrace is often capable of humiliating those who appear the most resolute and determined.

Mandeville isn't satisfied with representing the trivial motive of vanity as the source of all the actions that are commonly regarded as virtuous. He also tries to point out many other respects in which human virtue is imperfect. In every case, he claims, it falls short of the complete self-denial that it lays claim to, and is commonly a mere concealed indulgence of our passions rather than a victory over them. He treats as gross luxury and sensuality any relation to •pleasure except the most ascetic abstinence from •it. He counts as a luxury anything that goes beyond what is absolutely necessary for the support of human nature, so that there is vice even in the use of a clean shirt, or of a convenient place to live. He doesn't morally distinguish •lawful sexual relations between husband and wife from

•harmful ·and unlawful· gratification of sexual desire; and he sneers at a ‘temperance’ and a ‘chastity’ that can be practised at so cheap a rate, ·i.e. the cheap rate of merely being married to your sexual partner·. The ingenious sophistry of his reasoning, is here, as on many other occasions, covered by the ambiguity of language. [Smith explains this at considerable and slightly tangled length. When someone has a disagreeable and offensive degree of the passion *love of sex*, this disturbs and upsets people, which means that they *notice* it and want to have a name for it; the chosen name in English being ‘lust’. When someone has this desire in a degree that *doesn’t* upset onlookers, they may completely overlook it, and if they do want to talk about it they give it a name that expresses the fact of its being kept down to a moderate level, the name being ‘chastity’. Smith’s other example is the love of pleasure, and the words ‘luxury’ for an extreme degree of this passion and ‘temperance’ for the fact that someone’s love of pleasure is suitably bounded. [That was true of ‘luxury’ in his day, though not in ours.] Mandeville’s trick has been to assume that ‘he is temperate’ means that he has no love of pleasure, and that ‘he is chaste’ means that he has no love of sex; and he claims to uncover the scandalous fact that supposedly temperate people do have some love of pleasure, and that supposedly chaste ones have some love of sex. By proceeding in this way, Smith continues:] Mandeville imagines that he has entirely demolished the reality of the virtues of temperance and chastity. . . . But those virtues don’t require that one be entirely numb to the objects of the passions they try govern. They aim only at keeping the violence of those passions below the level at which they might harm the individual or disturb or offend society.

The great fallacy of Mandeville’s book is its representing any passion that is

- •vicious when it occurs with a certain intensity and aims in a certain direction

as though it were

- •vicious whenever it occurs with any degree of intensity and whatever direction it aims in.

That’s how he goes about treating as *vanity* any passion that involves any reference to the sentiments that other people do have or ought to have; and it’s how he arrives at his favourite conclusion, namely that ‘private vices are public benefits’. If the love of magnificence, a taste

> for the elegant arts and improvements of human life, for whatever is agreeable in dress, furniture, architecture, statuary, painting, and music

is to be regarded as 'luxury', 'sensuality', and 'showing off', even in those whose are in a position to indulge those passions without harming anyone else, then indeed luxury, sensuality, and showing off *are* indeed public benefits! That's because without the qualities to which Mandeville sees fit to give such nasty names, the arts of refinement would have no encouragement, and would eventually die for lack of employment. The real foundation of this licentious system was a set of popular ascetic doctrines that had been current before Mandeville's time and identified •virtue with •the complete wiping out of all our passions. It was easy for him to prove **(1)** that this entire conquest of all human passions never happened, and **(2)** that if it did occur universally, that would be pernicious to society because it would put an end to all industry and commerce and—in a way—to the whole business of human life. He used **(1)** to give himself the appearance of proving that there is no real virtue, and that what claimed to be virtue was a mere cheat and imposition on mankind; and he used **(2)** to give himself the appearance of proving that •private vices are public benefits because without •them no society could prosper or flourish.

Such is the system of Mandeville, which ·was published 45 years ago and· once made so much noise in the world. It may not have given rise to more vice than there would have been without it; but it did at least encourage vice that arose from other causes to appear more boldly and to proclaim the corruptness of its motives with a bold openness that had never been heard of before.

This system. . . .could never have imposed on so many people, or given rise to such a general alarm among the friends of better principles, if it hadn't in some respects bordered on the truth. ·I am not saying that *no* theory can get widespread acceptance unless it is close to the truth·. A theory in **natural philosophy** [here = 'science'] may seem plausible and be for a long time generally accepted, without having any basis in nature or any sort of resemblance to the truth. Descartes's 'vortices' were regarded by a ingenious nation, ·the French·, for nearly a century as a satisfactory account of the revolutions of the heavenly bodies. Yet it has been demonstrated to *everyone's* satisfaction that these supposed causes of those wonderful effects not only don't actually exist but are utterly impossible, and that if they did exist they couldn't produce the effects that Descartes

ascribed to them. But it's not like that with systems of **moral philosophy**. An author claiming to account for the origin of our moral sentiments can't deceive us so grossly, or depart so far from all resemblance to the truth ·as did the Cartesian theory of 'vortices'·. When a traveller describes some distant country, he can pass off groundless and absurd fictions as established matters of fact. But when someone offers to inform us of •what is going on in our neighbourhood, and of •the affairs of the parish that we live in, although he may get us to accept many falsehoods (if we don't take the trouble to examine things with our own eyes), the greatest falsehoods that he gets us to accept must have *some* resemblance to the truth, and must even have a considerable mixture of truth in them. . . .

Section 3: The different systems that have been formed concerning the source of approval

Introduction

After the inquiry into the nature of virtue, the next most important question in moral philosophy concerns the source of *approval*—the power or faculty of the mind that makes certain characters agreeable or disagreeable to us, makes us prefer one tenor of conduct to another, calling one 'right' and the other 'wrong', and consider one as an object of approval, honour, and reward and the other as an object of blame, censure, and punishment.

Three accounts have been given of the generator of approval. Some people hold that we approve and disapprove of actions—our own and other people's—purely from **(1)** self-love, i.e. from what we think about their tendency to ·lead to· our own happiness or disadvantage. Others say that **(2)** reason—the faculty by which we distinguish truth from falsehood—enables us to distinguish what is fit from what is unfit, both in actions and affections. According to yet others, this distinction is wholly an effect of **(3)** immediate sentiment and feeling, arising from the satisfaction or disgust that certain actions or affections produce in us. So there they are, the three different sources that have been assigned for the principle [see note below] of approval: **(1)** self-love, **(2)** reason, **(3)** sentiment.

Before I go on to describe those different systems, I should remark that finding the right answer to this question, though it's very important for moral theory, has no practical significance. The question about the nature of virtue is bound to have some influence on our notions of right and wrong in many particular cases, but the question about the principle of approval can't possibly have any such effect. It's only from philosophical curiosity that we try to discover what the inner contrivance or mechanism is from which those different notions or sentiments arise. [In the early modern period, the word 'principle' was sometimes used with the meaning we have for it, in which a principle is a proposition with a special status; but it was *much more often* used to mean 'source' or 'cause' or 'drive'—something entirely non-propositional that brings about some event or state of affairs. In the present version 'principle' is usually replaced by one of those other words when it has been used in this early-modern sense—e.g. in the heading of the present Section, where 'principle' has been replaced by 'source'. We have just met an agreeably clear bit of evidence of how the land lies: after saying that

his topic is a question about **the principle of approval**, Smith goes straight on to say that it's an inquiry into the inner **contrivance or mechanism** from which approval arises.]

Chapter 1: Systems that trace the source of approval back to self-love

Those who explain approval as arising from self-love don't all account for it in the same manner, and *all* their different systems contain a good deal of confusion and imprecision. According to Hobbes and many of his followers —such as Pufendorf and Mandeville—man is driven to take refuge in society not by any natural love for his own kind but because without the help of others he is incapable of surviving with ease or safety. According to this theory, society becomes *necessary* for a man, and anything that favours the support and welfare of •society he regards as having an indirect tendency to promote •his own interests; and anything that is likely to disturb or destroy •society he regards as to some extent harmful or pernicious to •himself. Virtue is the great support of society, and vice its great disturber. That is why virtue is agreeable to every man and vice is offensive to him; he sees virtue as pointing to the prosperity of the society that is so necessary for the comfort and security of his existence, and vice as pointing to its ruin and disorder.

As I remarked earlier, there can be no doubt that virtue's tendency to promote the order of society and vice's tendency to disturb it reflects a great beauty in virtue and a great ugliness in vice; and I mean that we get this sense of beauty and ugliness when we consider this matter coolly and philosophically—·i.e. setting aside the fact that we have a stake in society's surviving and flourishing·. When we think about human society in a certain abstract and philosophical light, it appears like an immense *machine* whose regular and harmonious movements produce countless agreeable effects. As with any other beautiful and noble machine made by men, whatever tends to make its movements smoother and easier will derive a beauty from this effect, and whatever tends to obstruct its movements will displease on that account. So virtue, which is like the fine polish to the wheels of society, necessarily pleases; while vice, like the vile rust that makes the wheels jar and grate on one another, is as necessarily offensive. So this account of the origin of approval and disapproval, to the extent that it derives them from a concern for the order of society, turns into the account that gives beauty to *utility* (I explained this earlier); and *that*'s the source of all the plausibility that this ·Hobbes· system has. When those authors

•describe the countless ways in which a cultivated and social life is better than a savage and solitary one,

•go on about how virtue and good order are needed for social life to survive, and

•demonstrate how certain it is that the prevalence of vice and lawlessness tends to bring back the savage life,

the reader is charmed with the novelty and grandeur of the views that they open to him. He now clearly sees a beauty in virtue and an ugliness in vice that he hadn't noticed before, and is commonly so delighted with the discovery that he doesn't takes time to reflect that this political view, having never occurred to him in his life before, can't *possibly* be the source of the approval and disapproval that he has always been accustomed to give to virtue and vice.

When those authors derive from self-love our interest in the welfare of society and the esteem that we therefore give to virtue, they don't mean that when we now applaud the virtue of Cato and detest the villainy of Catiline our sentiments are influenced by any thought of getting benefit from Cato or being harmed by Catiline!. . . . The Hobbesian philosophers never imagined that when we applaud Cato and blame Catiline we are influenced by some belief about how the behaviour of those citizens of ancient Rome might cause events that help or harm us *now*. Their view was rather that these moral sentiments of ours are influenced by ·the thought of· the help or harm we might have received if we had lived at that time in that place, or by ·the thought of· help or harm that might still come our way if we encounter characters of the same kinds as Cato and Catiline. So really the idea that those authors were groping for, but were never able to get hold of firmly, was the idea of the indirect *sympathy* that we feel with the gratitude or resentment of those who received the benefit or suffered the damage resulting from such opposite characters. *That* is what they were vaguely gesturing towards when they said that what prompted our applause or indignation was not •the thought of what we had gained or suffered but rather •the conception or imagination of what we might gain or suffer if we were to act in society with such associates.

But there is nothing selfish about sympathy! When I sympathize with your sorrow or your indignation, it may be claimed that my emotion is based on self-love because it arises from bringing your case home to myself, putting myself in your situation, and in that way getting a sense of

what I would feel in those circumstances. But although it's true that sympathy arises from an imaginary change of situations with the person principally concerned, this imaginary change is not supposed to happen to

•me in my own person and character,

but to

•me in the character of the person with whom I sympathize.

When I sympathize with you over the death of your only son, in order to enter into your grief I don't think about

•what I, a person of such-and-such a character and profession, would suffer if I had an only son who died.

What I think about is rather

•what I would suffer if I were really you.

In this thought I don't just switch your •circumstances with mine; I change •persons and •characters. So my grief is not in the least selfish: it is entirely on your account, and not in the least on my own. . . . A man may sympathize with a woman in the labour of child-birth, but he can't possibly conceive *himself* —in his own proper person and character—as suffering her pains. That whole account of human nature, which

•derives all sentiments and affections from self-love, which

•has made so much noise in the world, but which

•appears never yet to have been fully and clearly explained,

seems to me to have arisen from some confused failure to grasp what sympathy is.

Chapter 2: Systems that make reason the source of approval

It is well known to have been Hobbes's view that a state of nature is a state of war; and that before civil government was set up there could be no safe or peaceable society among men. According to him, therefore, preserving society is supporting civil government, and destroying civil government was the same thing as putting an end to society. But the existence of civil government depends on people's obeying the supreme magistrate [here = 'the ruler']. The moment he loses his authority all government is at an end. So, Hobbes concludes, because ·a desire for· self-preservation teaches men to applaud whatever tends to promote the welfare of society and to blame whatever is likely to harm it, that same desire ought to teach them to applaud all instances of obedience to the civil magistrate and to blame all disobedience and rebellion—it •ought to, and it •will if they think and speak

consistently. Thus, the ideas of *laudable* and *blameworthy* ought coincide with the ideas of *obedient* and *disobedient*; so the laws of the civil magistrate ought to be regarded as the sole ultimate standards of what is just and unjust, right and wrong.

It was Hobbes's announced intention, in publishing these notions, to bring men's consciences immediately under the civil powers—*not* the ecclesiastical powers, whose turbulence and ambition he regarded as the principal source of the disorders of society (he had been taught to think this by the example of his own times, ·which covered the entire Cromwellian revolution against Charles I·). This made his doctrine especially offensive to theologians, who accordingly vented their indignation against him with great ferocity and bitterness. It was also offensive to all sound moralists because it supposed that there is no *natural* distinction between •right and •wrong, that •these could be changed, being dependent on what the civil magistrate *chooses* to command. So Hobbes's account of things was attacked from all directions, and with all sorts of weapons, by sober reason as well as by furious declamation.

In order to refute this odious doctrine it was necessary to prove that in advance of any law or man-made institutions the ·human· mind was *naturally* endowed with a faculty by which it distinguished in certain actions and affections the qualities of right, praiseworthy, and virtuous, and in others those of wrong, blameworthy and vicious.

Cudworth in his *Treatise concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality* rightly said that law couldn't be the original source of those distinctions, ·using the following argument·.

(1) it is right to obey it and wrong to disobey it, or

(2) it makes no moral difference whether we obey it or disobey it.

If **(2)** is correct, then there's a law that obviously couldn't be the source of the distinction between right and wrong; and if **(1)** is right, then this presupposes that there is a standard for right and wrong independently of this law, a standard in terms of which we can say that obedience to the law squares with the idea of right, and disobedience squares with the idea of wrong.

So the mind has a notion of those distinctions antecedent to all law; and from this it seems to follow (·Cudworth said·) that this notion was derived from reason, which distinguishes right from wrong in the same way that it distinguishes truth from falsehood. There is some truth in this conclusion,

though in some ways it is rather hasty. It was easier to accept back then, when the abstract science of human nature was still in its infancy, and the different roles and powers of the different faculties of the human mind hadn't yet been carefully examined and distinguished from one another. [This could refer to Hume's work; he published his *Treatise* and both *Enquiries* in the 28 years between the publication of that work of Cudworth's and Smith's writing of the present work. (Cudworth's book was first published 43 years after his death.)] When this controversy with ·the views of· Hobbes was being carried on with such warmth and keenness, no-one had thought of any other faculty from which such moral ideas could be supposed to arise. And so at that time it was widely accepted that the essences of virtue and vice consist not in conformity or disagreement of human actions with •the law of a superior, but in their conformity or disagreement with •reason, which thereby came to be regarded as the original source and driver of approval and disapproval.

That virtue consists in conformity to reason is true *in some respects*, and reason can rightly considered as *in some sense* the source and driver of approval and disapproval, and of all solid judgments about right and wrong. It is by reason that we discover the general rules of justice by which we ought to regulate our actions; and it is by reason that we form the more vague and indeterminate ideas of what is prudent, or decent, or generous or noble, which we carry around with us, doing our best to model the tenor of our conduct on them [see note on 'tenor' here]. Like *all* general maxims, the general maxims of morality are based on experience and induction. We observe in a variety of particular cases what pleases or displeases our moral faculties,. . . .and by induction from this experience we set up the general rules. And induction is always regarded as an operation of reason. So it is right to say that we derive from reason all those general maxims and ideas. ·This is an important result, because· general maxims regulate most of our moral judgments. Those judgments would be extremely uncertain and precarious if they depended entirely on something as variable as immediate sentiment and feeling, which the different states of health and mood can alter so essentially. Thus, our most solid judgments about right and wrong are regulated by maxims and ideas derived from an induction of reason; so it is correct to say that virtue consists in conformity to reason, and we can go that far with the thesis that reason is the source and driver of approval and disapproval.

But ·that's as far as we can go·; it is altogether absurd and unintelligible to suppose that our first ·or most basic· perceptions of right and wrong can be derived from reason, even in the particular cases on the basis of which we form general moral rules. These first perceptions can't be an object of reason; they must be matters of immediate sense and feeling. (That holds true for *all* experiences on which *any* general rules are based.) We form the general rules of morality by finding in a vast variety of instances that one tenor of conduct constantly pleases in a certain way and that another constantly displeases. But reason can't make any particular object either agreeable or disagreeable to the mind •for its own sake. Reason can show that this object is a means to getting something else that is naturally either pleasing or displeasing, and in this way reason can make it either agreeable or disagreeable •for the sake of something else. But nothing can be agreeable or disagreeable for its own sake unless it is made to be so by immediate sense and feeling. So if virtue in each particular case necessarily pleases for its own sake, and if vice equally certainly displeases the mind, then what reconciles us to virtue and alienates us from vice can't be reason; it has to be immediate sense and feeling. [Smith now offers a short paragraph in which he seems to lose track of what he wanted to say. Its main point is to liken distinguishing virtue from vice to distinguishing pleasure from pain.]

But because reason can in a certain sense be regarded as the source of •approval and disapproval, •these sentiments were carelessly regarded as basically flowing from the operations of reason; and that went on for a long time. Hutcheson had the merit of being the first who distinguished with any degree of precision in what respect all moral distinctions may be said to arise from reason, and in what respect they are founded on immediate sense and feeling. In his illustrations of the moral sense he has explained this so fully, and I think so unanswerably, that any remaining controversy about the subject must be due either to inattention to what Hutcheson wrote or to a superstitious attachment to certain forms of expression. . . .

Chapter 3: Systems that make sentiment the source of approval

Systems that make *sentiment* the source of approval can be divided into two classes.

(1) According to some writers, our approvals express a sentiment of a special kind; we have a particular power of perception that the mind

employs when it encounters certain actions or affections. Some of them have an agreeable effect on this faculty, and they are given the labels ‘right’, ‘praiseworthy’, and ‘virtuous’. Others have a disagreeable effect on the faculty, and are labelled ‘wrong’, ‘blameworthy’, and ‘vicious’. These writers regard this sentiment as being of a special nature distinct from every other, and as the effect of a particular power of perception—·as distinct from any of the others as the sense of sight is distinct from the sense of hearing·—so they give it a name of its own and call it a ‘moral sense’.

(2) According to others, we can account for the business of *approving* without having to suppose any new power of perception that has never been heard of before. They think that Nature acts here—as everywhere else—with the strictest economy, producing a multitude of effects from a single cause; and that all the effects ascribed to this peculiar faculty of ‘moral sense’ can be explained in terms of *sympathy*, a power that we obviously *do* have and that has always been known and noticed. [In the last paragraph of this chapter Smith briefly deals with **(2)**; the rest of the chapter is all about **(1)**.]

Hutcheson was at great pains to show that the approval is not driven by self-love. [Smith refers to Hutcheson’s *Inquiry concerning Virtue*; for what he probably meant, see note here.] He demonstrated too that it couldn’t arise from any operation of reason. The only remaining possibility, he thought, was that approval is an exercise of a faculty of a special kind that Nature has given to the human mind purely so as to produce this one particular and important effect. With self-love and reason ruled out, it didn’t occur to him that the desired explanation might come from some other *known* faculty of the mind.

He called this ·supposed· new power of perception a moral sense, and thought it to be somewhat analogous to the external senses. Just as the bodies around us, by affecting our external senses in a certain way, appear to possess the different qualities of sound, taste, odour, colour; so the various affections of the human mind, by touching the moral sense in a certain manner, appear to possess the different qualities of likeable and odious, of virtuous and vicious, of right and wrong.

According to this system, the various senses—or powers of perception—from which the human mind derives all its simple ideas are of two kinds: **(1)** the direct or antecedent senses and **(2)** the reflex or consequent senses. **(1)** The direct senses are the faculties through which the mind gets its perceptions of qualities of things that don’t presuppose a previous perception of any other qualities. Thus sounds and colours are objects of the

direct senses. Hearing a sound or seeing a colour doesn't require us to perceive some other quality or object first. **(2)** The reflex or consequent senses are the faculties through which the mind gets perceptions of qualities of things that *do* presuppose a previous perception of some other qualities. For example, harmony and beauty are objects of the reflex senses: to perceive the harmony of a sound or the beauty of a colour we must first perceive the sound or the colour. The moral sense was regarded as a faculty of this kind. According to Hutcheson, the faculty that Locke called 'reflection', from which he derived the simple ideas of the passions and emotions of the human mind, is **(1)** a direct internal sense. And the faculty by which we perceive the beauty or ugliness—the virtue or vice—of those passions and emotions is **(2)** a reflex internal sense.

Hutcheson tried to support this doctrine further by pointing out that it is agreeable to the analogy of nature, because the mind does have a variety of other reflex senses exactly similar to the moral sense. Examples: a sense of beauty and ugliness in external objects; a public sense through which we sympathize with the happiness or misery of our fellow-creatures; a sense of shame and honour; a sense of ridicule.

But despite all the trouble this philosopher put into proving •his 'moral sense' theory,. . . .one of its *admitted* consequences will strike many of us as flatly refuting •it. He accepts that it would be highly absurd to ascribe to any •sense a quality belonging to •objects of that sense. ·He is right about this·: who ever thought of calling the sense of sight 'black' or 'white', the sense of hearing 'loud' or 'soft', or the sense of tasting 'sweet' or 'bitter'? Well, according to Hutcheson it is equally absurd to say that our moral faculties are 'virtuous' or 'vicious', 'morally good' or 'morally evil'. These are qualities of the objects of those faculties, not of the faculties themselves. Suppose we are confronted by someone who is so absurdly constituted that he approves of cruelty and injustice as the highest virtues, and disapproves of fairness and humaneness as the most pitiful vices. Such a constitution of mind might be regarded as bad for the individual and bad for society, and also as strange, surprising, and unnatural in itself; but—Hutcheson contends—it could not without absurdity be called vicious or morally evil.

But now suppose we see someone shouting with admiration and applause at a barbarous and undeserved execution that some insolent tyrant has ordered—we won't think we are guilty of any great absurdity in saying that this behaviour is vicious and morally evil in the highest degree,

although all it expresses are •depraved moral faculties, or •an absurd approval of this dreadful conduct. . . . In such a case I think we might for a while ignore our sympathy with the victim and feel nothing but horror and detestation at the thought of this dreadful spectator. We would abominate him even more than we would the tyrant who ordered the execution; he might have been goaded on by strong passions of jealousy, fear, and resentment, which would make him more excusable than the spectator. *His* sentiments seem to be entirely without cause or motive, and therefore to be perfectly and completely detestable. There's no perversion of sentiment or affection that our heart would. . . .reject with greater hatred and indignation than one of this kind; and so far from regarding such a constitution of mind as being merely 'strange' or 'unsuitable' and not in any respect vicious or morally evil, we would consider it rather as the last and most dreadful stage of moral depravity.

And on the other side of the ledger, correct moral sentiments naturally appear to be to some extent praiseworthy and morally good. If a man's applause and censure are always precisely suited to the value or unworthiness of the object, he seems to deserve a certain amount of moral approval for that. We admire the delicate precision of his moral sentiments; they provide leadership for our own judgments, and their uncommon and surprising justness arouses our wonder and applause. It's true that we can't always be sure that this person's *conduct* will match up to the precision and accuracy of his *judgments* about the conduct of others. Virtue requires •habit and •firmness of mind, as well as •delicacy of sentiment; and unfortunately the former qualities are sometimes lacking in people who have the latter in the greatest perfection. Still, this disposition of mind, although it may sometimes be accompanied by imperfections, is incompatible with anything grossly criminal and is the best foundation on which to build the superstructure of perfect virtue. There are many men who mean well, and seriously intend to do what they think is their duty, who notwithstanding are disagreeable because of the coarseness of their moral sentiments.

You may want to object:

> Although the source of approval isn't based on any power of perception analogous to the external senses, it may still be based on a special sentiment that serves this one particular purpose and no other. Approval and disapproval are •certain feelings or emotions that arise in

the mind when it sees or contemplates characters and actions; and just as resentment might be called ‘a sense of injuries’ and gratitude ‘a sense of benefits’, so •these feelings can properly be called ‘a sense of right and wrong’ or ‘a moral sense’.

But this account of things, though not open to the same objections as the previous account, is exposed to ·two· others that are equally unanswerable.

(1) Whatever variations any specific kind of emotion may undergo, it still preserves the general features that mark it off as being of that kind; and these general features are always more striking and noticeable than any variation which it may undergo in particular cases. For example: *anger* is an emotion of a specific kind, so that its general features always stand out more clearly than all the variations it undergoes in particular cases. Anger against a •man differs somewhat from anger against a •woman, which differs from anger against a •child. In each of those cases the general passion of anger appears in a different version because of the particular character of its object; you’ll easily see this if you *attend* ·to what goes on in you when you are angry·. But what predominate in all these cases are the general features of the passion. To distinguish *these* you don’t need any precise observation, whereas a delicate attention is needed if one is to discover *their variations*; everyone is aware of the general features, while hardly anyone notices the variations. Well, then, if approval and disapproval were emotions of a particular kind distinct from every other kind—in the way gratitude and resentment are—we would expect that each of them in all the variations it undergoes would still retain the general features that mark it off as an emotion of that particular kind, clear, plain, and easily distinguishable. But that isn’t what happens. Attend to what you really feel on different occasions when you approve of something. You’ll find that your emotion in one case is often totally different from [Smith’s phrase] what it is in another, and that you can’t find *any* features that those particular emotional episodes have in common. Your approval of a •tender, delicate, and humane sentiment ·in someone else· is quite different from your approval of sentiment that strikes you as •great, daring, and magnanimous. Your approval of each may be perfect and entire; but you are •softened by one and •elevated by the other, and there’s no sort of resemblance between the emotions they arouse in you. This is bound to be the case if my theory of the moral sentiments is true: the emotions of the persons you approve of are different and indeed opposite in those two cases;

your approval arises from sympathy with those opposite emotions; so *of course* what you feel on the one occasion can't have any resemblance to what you feel on the other. But this couldn't be right if approval consisted in a special emotion that •is triggered by a view of some sentiment in someone but •has nothing in common with that sentiment. And all this can be re-applied to *dis*approval. Our horror at cruelty has *no* resemblance to our contempt for mean-spiritedness. When we encounter cruelty, the discord we feel between our minds and the mind of cruel person is quite different from the discord we feel between our mind and the mind of someone who is mean-spirited.

(2) I would remind you of my earlier point that as well as approving or disapproving of

> •the different passions or affections of the human mind that we encounter,

we also find it natural to approve or disapprove of

> •people's approvals and disapprovals.

How can that be so if the theory now under investigation is right? In fact, to the question

> •How does it come about that we approve of proper approvals and disapprove of improper approvals?

only one answer can possibly be given. It is this: When •you approve ·or disapprove· of •his conduct, your frame of mind coincides with •mine; and so I approve of your approval ·or disapproval· and consider it as to some extent morally good. And when •your approval ·or disapproval· creates a mis-match between your frame of mind and my own, I disapprove of •it and consider it as to some extent morally evil. So it must be granted that at least in this one ·kind of· case, ·where A (dis)approves of B's (dis)approval of C·, what constitutes A's moral (dis)approval is the coincidence or opposition between A's sentiments and B's. And if that's what (dis)approval amounts to in this one ·kind of· case, why shouldn't it be what it amounts to in every other? Why imagine a *new* power of perception to account for those sentiments?

Any account of approval that makes it depend on a special sentiment distinct from every other is open to the following objection: It is strange that this sentiment, which Providence undoubtedly intended to be the governing force in human nature, should have been overlooked to such an extent that it doesn't have a name in any language! The phrase 'moral

sense' is a recent invention and can't yet be considered as part of the English tongue. It was only a few years ago that the word 'approbation' [= 'approval'] was appropriated to mean something of this kind. In propriety of language we approve of whatever is entirely to our satisfaction, the form of a building, the design of a machine, the flavor of a dish of meat. The word 'conscience' doesn't immediately stand for any moral faculty by which we approve or disapprove. Conscience does presuppose the existence of •some such faculty, and the word used properly signifies our awareness that we have acted agreeably or contrary to •its directions. When love, hatred, joy, sorrow, gratitude, resentment—and so many other passions that are all supposed to be governed by force of (dis)approval—have made themselves considerable enough to get labels, isn't it surprising that the sovereign of them all should have been so little noticed that no-one apart from a few philosophers has thought it worthwhile to give it a name?. . . .

[Picking up now from paragraph **(2)** here:] There's another system that tries to account for the origin of our moral sentiments in sympathy, but not in the way that I have been trying to establish. I have already given some account of it in Part IV above. This is a system that places virtue in *utility*, and explains the pleasure with which the spectator surveys the utility of any quality in terms of •sympathy with the happiness of those who get the benefit of it. This is different from the •sympathy by which we enter into the motives of the benefactor and from the •sympathy by which we go along with the gratitude of the beneficiaries. The causal story here is like the story of what happens when we approve of a well-designed machine. But no machine can be an object of either of those two last mentioned sympathies—sympathy with motives and sympathy with gratitude.

Section 4: What different authors have said about the practical rules of morality

I noted in Part III above [here] that the rules of justice are the only rules of morality that are precise and detailed; that the rules of all the other virtues are loose, vague, and indeterminate. And I likened the rules of justice to rules of *grammar*, and those of the other virtues to rules that critics lay down for the achievement of what is sublime and elegant in composition, presenting us with a general idea of the perfection we ought to aim at rather than giving us any certain and infallible directions for acquiring it.

Because the different rules of morality can differ so much in their degrees of precision, authors wanting to collect and digest them into systems have gone about this in two different ways. **(1)** One set has followed through the whole loose method that they were naturally directed to by considering any one species of virtues. **(2)** The other set has universally tried to introduce into their precepts the kind of precision that only some of them are capable of. **(1)** have written like critics, **(2)** like grammarians.

(1) The first group include all the ancient moralists, and others. They have contented themselves with describing the different vices and virtues in a general manner, and with pointing out the ugliness and misery of one disposition and the propriety and happiness of the other; they haven't pretended to lay down many precise rules that are to hold good in all particular cases, with no exceptions. What they *have* done are two things. **(a)** They have tried to say, as precisely as language will allow,

> •what the sentiment of the heart is on which each specific kind of virtue is founded—what sort of internal feeling or emotion constitutes the essence of friendship, of humaneness, of generosity, of justice, of magnanimity, and of all the other virtues; and •what the sentiment of the heart is in the vices that are the opposites of those virtues.

(b) And they have tried to say what is the general way of acting—the ordinary tone and tenor of conduct—to which each of those sentiments would direct us, i.e. what kind of conduct ordinarily goes with a person's being friendly, or generous, or brave, or just, or humane.

(a) Sketching the sentiment of the heart on which each particular virtue is based requires a pencil that is both delicate and precise, but it's a task that

can be carried out with some degree of exactness. Of course it isn't possible to express *all* the variations that each sentiment either does or ought to undergo according to every possible variation of circumstances. The variations are endless, and language lacks names for ·most of· them. Consider for example the sentiment of friendship.

- The feeling of our friendship for an old man differs from what we feel for a young man.
- The feeling of our friendship for an austere man differs from what we feel for someone who has softer and gentler manners.
- The feeling of our friendship for a gentle man differs from what we feel for one who has cheerful vivacity and spirit.
- The feeling of our friendship for a man differs from what we feel for a woman, even when there is no sexual feeling mixed in with it.

What author could list and describe these and all the other infinite varieties that friendship can undergo? Still, the general sentiment of friendship and familiar attachment that is common to them all can be pinned down precisely enough. Although the picture that is drawn of it will always be incomplete, it may provide enough of a likeness to enable us to know the original when we meet with it, and even to distinguish it from other sentiments that are considerably like it, such as good-will, respect, esteem, admiration.

(b) To describe in a general way the way of acting to which each virtue would ordinarily prompt us is even easier. In fact it is hardly possible to **(a)** describe the internal sentiment or emotion on which a virtue is based without doing **(b)** something of this kind. It isn't possible to express in language the invisible features of all the different special forms of a passion as they show themselves **within**. The only way to mark them off from one another is by describing the effects that they produce **without**—facial expression and external behaviour, the resolutions they suggest, the actions they prompt to. That is what led Cicero in Book 1 of his *Offices* to direct us to the *practice* of the four cardinal virtues; and led Aristotle in the practical parts of his *Ethics* to point out to us the different *habits* by which he would have us regulate our behaviour—habit such as those of liberality, magnificence, magnanimity. . . .

Such works present us with nice lively pictures of manners. Their liveliness stirs up our natural love of virtue, and increases our hatred of vice; by the rightness and delicacy of their observations they can help to

correct. . . .our natural sentiments concerning the propriety of conduct,. . . .helping us to get our behaviour more exactly right, by standards that we might not have thought of without such instruction. This treatment of the rules of morality is the science that is properly called 'Ethics'—a science that •can't be done with great precision (it's like criticism in that respect) but that •is nevertheless highly useful and agreeable. It is more open than any other science to using the ornaments of eloquence, through which it gives even the smallest rules of duty a new importance. Its precepts, thus adorned, can produce noble and lasting impressions on young people, getting them while they are young enough to be flexible. . . . Anything that precept and exhortation [= roughly 'commanding and pleading'] can do to spur us to the practice of virtue is done by this science delivered in this way. [That completes **(1)**, started here.]

(2) The second set of moralists •don't content themselves with characterizing in this general manner the tenor of conduct that they want to recommend to us, but •work to lay down exact and precise rules to govern every detail of our behaviour. This group includes:

> **(a)** All the casuists [= 'applied-ethics theorists'] of the middle and latter ages of the Christian church, as well as
>
> **(b)** All those who, during those times or in the century just past, have written about 'natural jurisprudence', as they call it.

Because justice is the only virtue for which such exact rules can properly be given, it's the one that has had most consideration from both of those sub-groups of writers. But they treat it very differently.

(b) Those who write about the principles of jurisprudence attend only to what the person to whom the obligation is due ought to think he is entitled to get *by force*—what every impartial spectator would approve of him for getting in that way, or what a duly appointed judge or arbiter ought to *require* the other person to allow or do. **(a)** The casuists attend less to

> •what one can properly use force to get from someone

than to

> •what the person who owes the obligation ought to think himself bound to perform because of a sacred and scrupulous regard for the general rules of justice, and of a conscientious fear of wronging his neighbour or of violating the integrity of his own character.

What jurisprudence is *for* is to prescribe rules for the decisions of judges and arbiters. What casuistry is for is to prescribe rules for the conduct of a

good man. If the rules of jurisprudence were perfectly complete, and if we always obeyed them all, what would we then deserve? Nothing but •freedom from external punishment! But if the rules of casuistry were such as they ought to be, and we always obeyed them all, the exact and scrupulous delicacy of our behaviour would entitle us to •considerable praise.

It can happen that a good man ought to think himself bound by a sacred and conscientious respect for the general rules of justice to do something that it would be utterly unjust to extort from him, or for any judge or arbiter to impose on him by force. A trite example: a traveller is obliged by his fear of death to promise a certain sum of money to a highwayman. Should a promise that is in this manner extorted by unjust force be regarded as obligatory? That question has been much debated.

If we take it merely as a question of jurisprudence, the answer is obvious: it would be absurd to suppose that the highwayman can be entitled to use force to constrain the traveller to keep his promise. Extorting the promise was a crime that deserved severe punishment, and extorting the promise-keeping would only be adding a second crime to the first. . . . It would be a ridiculous absurdity to suppose that a judge ought to enforce the keeping of such promises, or that the magistrate [here = 'the legal system'] ought to allow actions at law concerning them. So if we consider this question as a question in **jurisprudence**, the answer is easy.

But if we understand it rather as a question in **casuistry**, it isn't so easily answered. Consider a good man who has a conscientious regard for the sacred rule of justice commanding that all serious promises be kept: will *he* think himself obliged to keep his promise to the highwayman? There really is a *question* about this. Everyone will agree that

> •this good man isn't obliged to care about the disappointment of the wretch who brought him into this situation, that
>
> •no injury is done to the robber ·by the promise's not being kept·, and consequently that
>
> •payment of the promise can't be extorted by force.

·That stops jurisprudence from ruling that the promise should be kept, but casuistry may still have something to say·. It may be the case that

> •this good man owes some respect to his own dignity and honour, to the inviolable sacredness of the part of his character that makes him

> reverence the law of truth and hate everything that smacks of treachery and falsehood.

It's not obvious that this is false; and the casuists are greatly divided about such cases. On one side there are those who unhesitatingly say that no sort of regard is due to any such promise, and that to think otherwise is mere weakness and superstition. Cicero was one of these, among the ancients, and Pufendorf among the moderns. Also, above all, Hutcheson, who in most cases was by no means a loose ·or unduly permissive· casuist. On the other side are some of the ancient fathers of the church (e.g. Augustine) as well as some eminent modern casuists; they judge that all such promises are obligatory.

If we bring the common sentiments of mankind to bear on the question, we get the answer that **some** regard is due even to a promise of this kind, but that it's impossible to determine **how much** by any general rule that will apply to all cases without exception. A man who is quite frank and easy in making promises of this kind, and who violates them quite casually, is not someone we would choose as a friend and companion. A gentleman who promised a highwayman five pounds and didn't pay would incur some blame. But if the promised sum was very large, it might be more doubtful what was the right thing to do. Suppose that keeping the promise would entirely ruin the family of the promiser, or that the sum was large enough be sufficient for promoting the most useful purposes, *then* it would seem to be in some measure criminal, or at least extremely improper, to put it into such worthless hands merely for the sake of a punctilio [= 'a nit-picking point in morals']. A man who beggared himself, or one who threw away a hundred thousand pounds (even if he could afford that vast sum) so as to keep his word to a thief would appear to the common sense of mankind to be utterly absurd and extravagant. Such profusion would seem inconsistent with his duty—with what he owed both to himself and to others. . . . But it's obviously impossible to lay down any precise rule saying how much respect should be had for such a promise, or what the greatest sum is that could be owing because of it. This would vary according to

> —the characters of the persons,
>
> —their circumstances,
>
> —the solemnity of the promise, and
>
> —what in detail happened in the hold-up on the highway.

·Regarding that last item·: If the promiser had been treated with a great deal of the sort of elaborate politeness that is sometimes to be met with in really bad people, the promise would seem to have more force than it would otherwise have had. It may be said in general that

> exact propriety requires that all such promises should be kept, except when that would be inconsistent with some other duties that are more sacred, such as •regard for the public interest, •regard for those who should be provided for out of gratitude, natural affection, or respect for the laws of proper beneficence.

But, I repeat, we have no precise rules to determine what actions such motives require or, therefore, to determine when those virtues are inconsistent with keeping such promises.

We should remember, though, that whenever such promises are broken—even if for the most necessary reasons—that will always bring some degree of dishonour to the person who made them. After they are made, we may be convinced that it would be wrong to keep them, but still there is some fault in having made them ·in the first place·. It is, at least, a departure from the highest and noblest maxims of magnanimity and honour; a brave man ought to die rather than make a promise that it would be foolish to keep and disgraceful to break. For some degree of disgrace always accompanies a situation of this kind. Treachery and falsehood are vices so dangerous, so dreadful, and at the same time so •easy to practice and often so •safe, that we are more protective concerning them than concerning almost any other. So our imagination attaches the idea of shame to all violations of faith, in every circumstance and in every situation. In this respect they resemble the violations of chastity in the fair sex, a virtue of which (for the same reasons) we are excessively protective; and our sentiments concerning female chastity are not more delicate than our sentiments concerning the breaking of promises. A breach of chastity dishonours the woman irretrievably. No details of the case. . . .can excuse it; no sorrow or repentance can atone for it. We are so hard to satisfy in this respect that even a rape dishonours ·the victim·: in our imagination the innocence of her mind can't wash out the pollution of her body. It is just like that with breaking one's word when it has been solemnly pledged, even if it was to the most worthless of mankind. Fidelity [here = 'promise-keeping'] is such a *necessary* virtue that we see it as being in general due even to those to whom nothing else is due, and whom we think it lawful to kill and destroy. The culprit may plead that he

promised only in order to save his life, and that he broke his promise because keeping it would be inconsistent with some other respectworthy duty; these facts may alleviate his dishonour but they can't entirely wipe it out. He appears to have been guilty of an action that has some degree of shame inseparably connected with it in the imaginations of men, He has broken a promise that he had solemnly said he would keep; and his character, if not irretrievably stained and polluted, at least has affixed to it a ridicule that it will be difficult to get rid of entirely. No man who had gone through an adventure of this kind would be fond of telling the story!

This example may serve to show how casuistry differs from jurisprudence, even when both are dealing with the obligations of the general rules of justice.

But though this difference is real and essential, though those two sciences have quite different purposes, the sameness of their subject-matter has made them alike—so much so that most authors who announce that they are doing jurisprudence raise various questions of which they answer *some* according to the principles of jurisprudence and *others* according to those of casuistry, without distinguishing them and perhaps without even being aware of this switch whenever it occurs.

But casuistry is by no means confined questions about what would be demanded of us by a conscientious respect for the •general rules of justice. It also takes in many •other parts of Christian and moral duty. What seems principally to have led to the development of casuistry was the custom of spoken confession, introduced by the Roman Catholic superstition in times of barbarism and ignorance. By that institution everyone's most secret actions and even thoughts that could be suspected of veering away ever so slightly from the rules of Christian purity were to be revealed to the confessor. The confessor told his penitents whether and how they had violated their duty, and what penance they would have to undergo before he could absolve them in the name of the offended Deity.

The consciousness of having done wrong, or even the *suspicion* of it, is a load on every mind; and it is accompanied by anxiety and terror in everyone who isn't hardened by long habits of wickedness. Here as in all other distresses men are naturally eager to unburden themselves of the oppression they feel on their thoughts, by revealing the agony of their mind to someone whose secrecy and discretion they can trust in. The shame they suffer from this acknowledgment is fully compensated for by the lessening of their

uneasiness that nearly always comes from the sympathy of their confidant, ·the confessor·. They get relief from the discovery that they are not entirely unworthy of respect; and that however their past conduct may be censured, their present disposition is approved of and may be sufficient to make up for the past, or at least to bring them some degree of esteem from their friend, ·the confessor·. In those times of superstition a numerous and skillfully contriving clergy insinuated themselves into the confidence of almost every private family. [Smith continues at some length describing the priests as cunningly working themselves into the position of accepted moral authorities. Then:] To qualify themselves as confessors thus became a necessary part of the study of churchmen and divines; and that led them to collect what are called ‘cases of conscience’, difficult and delicate situations where it is hard to decide what is the right thing to do. Such collections, they imagined, might be useful to the directors of consciences and to those who were to be directed; and that is how books of casuistry were started.

The casuists mainly dealt with moral duties of which it is true that

- they can at least to some extent be covered by general rules, and
- the violation of them is naturally followed by some degree of remorse and some fear of punishment.

The institution that gave rise to their works—·namely, confession·—was designed soothe the terrors of conscience that come with the infringement of such duties. But one can fall short in *some* virtues without any severe moral worries of this kind; no-one applies to his confessor for absolution because he didn’t do the most generous, the most friendly, or the most magnanimous thing that could possibly have been done in his circumstances. The rule that is violated in failures of this kind is usually not determinate, and—a second point—is generally of such a kind that although one might be entitled to honour and reward for obeying it, one isn’t exposed to positive blame, censure, or punishment if one violates it. The exercise of virtues of that kind seems to have been regarded by the casuists as a sort of work of supererogation, which couldn’t be strictly demanded and which therefore didn’t have to be discussed by them. [‘Supererogation’ is still a standard English word, if not a very common one. A supererogatory act is one that goes beyond the call of duty, one that it is praiseworthy to perform and not blameworthy to not-perform.]

The breaches of moral duty that *did* come before the tribunal of the confessor, and on that account came within the s cope of the casuists, were chiefly of three kinds.

(1) Breaches of the rules of justice. These rules are all explicit, firm, and definite, and violating them naturally brings an •awareness of deserving and a •fear of suffering punishment from both God and man.

(2) Breaches of the rules of chastity. In all the grosser instances these are real breaches of the rules of justice, and no-one can be guilty of them without doing unpardonable harm to someone else. In lesser instances, where the breaches amount only to violations of the exact rules of conduct that ought to be observed in relations between the two sexes, they aren't violations of the rules of justice. Still, they are generally violations of a pretty plain rule, and they tend, in at least one of the sexes, •to bring disgrace on the person who has been guilty of them and thus to •be accompanied attended in scrupulous people with some degree of shame and remorse.

(3) Breaches of the rules of veracity. Although the violation of truth is often a breach of justice, it isn't always so, which is why such violations can't always expose the person to any external punishment. The vice of ordinary everyday lying, though a miserable meanness, often doesn't harm anyone; and in those cases no-one can claim to have a right of revenge or a right to compensation. But the violation of truth, though not always a breach of justice, is always a breach of a plain rule, and it naturally tends to bring shame on the person who is guilty of it.

·AN ASIDE ON TRUTHFULNESS·

Young children seem to have an instinctive disposition to believe whatever they are told. Nature seems to have judged it necessary for their survival that they should, for a while at least, have complete confidence in the people who entrusted with the care of their childhood and of the earliest and most necessary parts of their education. So they are excessively credulous, and it requires long experience of the falsehood of mankind to reduce them to a reasonable degree of caution and distrust. In adults the degrees of credulity are clearly different. The wisest and most experienced are generally the least credulous. But there's hardly a man alive who isn't more credulous than he ought to be, and who doesn't often believe tales that not only •turn out to be perfectly false but also •could have been spotted as false through a quite small amount of reflection and attention. One's natural disposition is always to believe. Only through acquired wisdom and experience do we learn incredulity, and we don't often learn enough. The

wisest and most cautious of us often accepts stories that he himself is afterwards both ashamed and astonished that he could possibly think of believing.

The man we believe is our leader and director in the matters concerning which we believe what he tells us, and we look up to him with a certain amount of esteem and respect. But just as we move from admiring other people to wanting to be admired ourselves, so also we move from being led and directed by other people to wanting to be leaders and directors ourselves. And just as we can't always be satisfied merely with being admired unless we can persuade ourselves that we are to some extent really worthy of admiration, so also we can't always be satisfied merely with being believed unless we are aware that we are really worthy of belief. Just as the desire for praise and the desire for praiseworthiness are (though closely related) distinct and separate desires, so also the desire to be believed and the desire to be worthy of belief are (though closely related) equally distinct and separate desires.

The desire to be believed—the desire to persuade, lead and direct other people—seems to be one of the strongest of all our natural desires. It may be the instinct on which the faculty of speech is based. . . . No other animal has this faculty, and we can't find in any other animal any desire to lead and direct the judgment and conduct of its fellows. Great ambition—the desire for real superiority, the desire to lead and direct—seems to be exclusive to man; and *speech* is the great instrument of ambition—of real superiority, of leading and directing the judgments and conduct of other people.

It is always humiliating not to be believed, and it is doubly so when we suspect that the reason we aren't believed is that we are regarded as •unworthy of belief and as •capable of seriously and deliberately deceiving. To tell a man that he lies is the gravest of all insults. Yet anyone who seriously and deliberately deceives others *must* be aware that he deserves this insult, that he doesn't deserve to be believed, and that he is giving up any claim to the sort of trust that he needs if he is to have any sort of ease, comfort, or satisfaction in the society of his equals. A man who had the misfortune to imagine that nobody believed a single word he said would feel himself an outcast from human society, would dread the thought of going into it, or of presenting himself before it; and I think he would probably die of despair. But it is likely that no man ever had good reason to have *this* belief about his situation. The most notorious liar, I'm inclined to

think, tells the truth at least twenty times for once that he seriously and deliberately lies; and just as in the most cautious people the disposition to believe is apt to prevail over the disposition to doubt and distrust, so also in those who care least about truth the natural disposition to tell it usually prevails over the disposition to deceive, or in any way to alter or disguise it.

We are humiliated when we happen to deceive other people, even though it was unintentional and a result of having been deceived ourselves. Although this involuntary falsehood is often not a sign of any lack of truthfulness—of any lack of the most perfect love of truth—it is always to some extent a sign of •lack of judgment, of failure of memory, of •improper credulity, of •some degree of impulsiveness and rashness. It always lessens our authority to persuade, and always casts some doubt on our fitness to lead and direct. Still, the man who sometimes misleads because he has made a mistake is very different from the one who is capable of wilfully deceiving. The former may safely be trusted on many occasions, the latter almost never.

Frankness and openness win confidence. We trust the man who seems willing to trust us. We see clearly, we think, the road along which he means to lead us, and we are glad to give ourselves over to his guidance and direction. Reserve and concealment, on the other hand, call forth *un*confidence. We're afraid to follow a man who is going we-don't-know-where. Also, what makes conversation and society such a pleasure is a certain correspondence of sentiments and opinions, a certain harmony of minds that blend and keep time with one another like musical instruments. But this delightful harmony can't be obtained unless there is a free communication of sentiments and opinions. So we all want to feel how each other is affected, to penetrate into each others' bosoms and observe the sentiments and affections that really exist there. The man who co-operates with us in this natural passion, who invites us into his heart,. . . .seems to offer a kind of hospitality that is more delightful than any other. [Smith goes on at rather laborious length about •the pleasures of open-hearted communication, •the dangers of going too far and prying into things that others want to keep private, •the unpleasantness of a person who repels *all* our attempts to get to know him, •the strengths and dangers of being temperamentally reserved and secretive, and •the upsettingness of learning that one has innocently passed along a falsehood. He works a few mentions

of the casuists into all this, and eventually returns to them as his main topic, with a quick recapitulation:]

So the chief topics of the writings of the casuists were these:

(1) the conscientious respect that should be paid to the rules of justice; how far we ought to respect the life and property of our neighbour; the duty of restitution;

(2) the laws of chastity and modesty, and what constituted the 'sins of concupiscence', as they called them [= 'sins involving an immoderate desire for worldly things'];

(3) the rules of veracity, and the obligation of oaths, promises, and contracts of all kinds.

The casuists in their works tried to take things that only •feeling and sentiment can judge of, and to direct them by •precise rules—tried and failed! How could one ascertain by rules

•the exact point at which in any given case a delicate sense of justice begins to turn into a trivial and weak fussiness of conscience?

•when secrecy and reserve begin to grow into dissimulation?

•how far an agreeable irony can be carried, and at what precise point it begins to degenerate into a detestable lie?

•what is the highest pitch of freedom and ease of behaviour that can be regarded as graceful and becoming, and when does it start to turn into a negligent and thoughtless licentiousness?

With regard to all such matters, what would be right in one case would hardly be exactly right in any other, and what constitutes behaving in a fully satisfactory way varies from case to case because of tiny differences in the situations. Books of casuistry, therefore, are generally as useless as they are commonly tiresome. They couldn't give much help to anyone who consulted them occasionally, even if their decisions were always right, because it is so unlikely that a casuist author will have considered cases *exactly* parallel to the one he is now being consulted about. Someone who is really anxious to do his duty must be weak if he thinks he has much use for works of casuistry; and as for someone who doesn't care much about his duty, the style of those writings makes them unlikely to awaken him to care more. None of them tend to animate us to what is generous and noble. None of them tend to soften us to what is gentle and humane. Many of them, on the contrary, tend rather to teach us to logic-chop with our own consciences, and by their vain subtleties serve to authorize countless evasive refinements

concerning the most essential articles of our duty. The frivolous precision that they tried to introduce into subjects that don't admit of it was almost certain to betray them into those dangerous errors; and at the same time it made their works dry and disagreeable, full of abstruse and metaphysical distinctions, but unable to arouse in the heart any of those emotions that it is the principal use of books of morality to arouse.

[In preparation for this paragraph, recall that Smith has identified three kinds of writings on morality, to which he gives the labels 'ethics', 'casuistry' and 'jurisprudence'.] The two useful parts of moral philosophy, therefore, are Ethics and Jurisprudence; Casuistry ought to be rejected altogether. •The ancient moralists appear to have judged much better ·than did the mediaeval and modern casuists·. When •they treated those same subjects they didn't make a parade of minute exactness, but settled for describing in a general way the sentiments on which justice, modesty, and veracity are founded, and the ordinary ways of acting to which those virtues would commonly prompt us.

[Some ancient philosophers did produce what looks like casuistry, Smith admits; he mentions Book 3 of Cicero's *Offices*. But he says that they weren't attempting any sort of completeness, and were only illustrating situations where there is a question as to whether the ordinary rules of duty should be adhered to.]

Every system of man-made law can be seen as a more or less imperfect attempt at a system of natural jurisprudence, or at an enumeration of the particular rules of justice. Because the violation of •justice is something men will never submit to from one another, the public magistrate [see note here] has to use the power of the commonwealth to enforce the practice of this •virtue. If this were not done, civil society would become a scene of bloodshed and disorder, with every man getting his own private revenge whenever he fancied he had been harmed. To prevent the confusion that would come with every man's •seeking justice for himself, the magistrate in any government that has acquired any considerable authority undertakes to •provide justice for everyone, and promises to hear and to redress every complaint of injury. In all well-governed states, as well as judges being appointed to settle the controversies of individuals, rules are laid down to regulate the decisions of those judges; and these rules are generally intended to coincide with the rules of natural justice. Not that they actually always do so. •It sometimes happens that the man-made laws of a country are wrenched away from what natural justice would prescribe—sometimes

by the so-called ‘constitution’ of the state, i.e. the interests of the government; and sometimes by the interests of particular groups of men who tyrannize the government. •In some countries, the crudeness and barbarism of the people prevent the natural sentiments of justice from reaching the accuracy and precision that they naturally attain to in more civilized nations. Their laws are, like their manners, gross and crude and undistinguishing [Smith’s word]. •In other countries where the people are civilized enough to sustain a disciplined regular system of jurisprudence, no such system becomes established because the unfortunate structure of their legal system blocks it. •In *no* country do the decisions of man-made law coincide, exactly and in every case, with the rules that the natural sense of justice would dictate. So systems of man-made law, though they deserve the greatest authority, as the records of mankind’s sentiments in different ages and nations, can’t ever be seen as accurate systems of the rules of natural justice.

One might have expected that lawyers’ reasonings about the various imperfections and improvements of the laws of various countries would give rise to an inquiry into what are the natural rules of justice independently of all man-made institutions. One might have expected that these reasonings would lead the lawyers to aim at establishing a system of *natural jurisprudence* properly so-called, a theory of the general principles that ought to permeate and be the foundation of the laws of all nations. Well, the reasonings of lawyers *did* produce something of this kind; and everyone who has systematically treated the laws of any particular country has mixed into his work many observations of this sort; but it was late in the world before any such general system was thought of, and before the philosophy of law was addressed on its own and without reference to the particular institutions of any one nation. In none of the ancient moralists, do we find any attempt at a detailed list of the rules of justice. Cicero in his *Offices* and Aristotle in his *Ethics* discuss •justice in the same general manner in which they discuss •all the other virtues. In the laws of Cicero and Plato, where we might naturally have expected some attempts at a list of the rules of natural equity—rules that ought to be enforced by the man-made laws of every country—there is nothing of this kind. Their laws are laws of policy, not of justice. Grotius seems to have been the first to try to give the world anything like a system of the principles that ought to permeate and be the foundation of the laws of all nations; and his treatise on

the laws of war and peace, with all its imperfections, is perhaps the most complete work that has so far been given on this subject. In another work I shall try to give an account of the general principles of law and government and of the different revolutions they have gone through in the different ages and periods of society, not only in relation to justice but also in relation to policy, taxation, and arms, and whatever else is the object of law.

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